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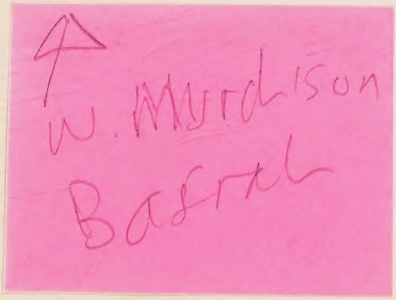

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A HIGHLAND FAMILY

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A HIGHLAND FAMILY

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A HIGHLAND FAMILY

CHAPTER I

THE FRASERS

Mine is to be a simple story of simple people. The Fraser family, of whom this book treats, lived in lowly conditions far from prying eyes other than mine, and, though Glasgow and Canada entered into their lives, and that with dire effect, yet did they beat out their round of happiness, hopes, defeat, and disillusionment, in their native setting of lonely mountains and glens and silent pine forests. Perhaps not all will agree in their estimates of the Brocach. Some will say he was a harsh, stubborn man, blind where he should have been clear-sighted, a sacrificing Abraham where he should have been a propitiating family god. As you will; but you must take Scotland as it is and Scotsmen as they are. Honest loyalty and service have ever been accounted virtues, however doubtful the ends to which

they were dedicated and however harsh may have been their effects on others. Loyalty is, of its nature, exclusive and undiscriminating, and if the Brocach falls, he falls in good company. History must then shed many a hero, and tragedy many a noble figure, a company in which the Brocach would have been greatly at home. But why judge of these things, considering how poor is our measure? I only know that the Fraser family now are but a memory, but a memory of great-heartedness and verve and graciousness, not unmixed with the pathos of ruin.

I first met Simon Fraser, called the Brocach, and his family some twenty years ago. It was autumn, the month of August, and our meeting was accidental. I was then engaged on my first walking tour in the Scottish Highlands and was full of callow enthusiasm. I left, one early morning, the inn in which I had spent the night, intending to cross some ridges, loiter in a long glen running up north-westerly, and in the evening climb a group of finely balanced hills and, from their summit, see the sunrise. The day passed pleasantly enough—botany, Clough's *Bothy of Tober na Vuolich*, and what not—and evening found

me on the shore of the dark little loch at the foot of the precipice of my finely balanced hills. I decided to spend the first hours of the night on this shore, and to climb when the moon was well up, to have light on the track where it was carried along the top of the precipice and to avoid a too long wait on the cold summit. These high altitudes are chilly in August nights.

I busied myself first of all with domestic arrangements. I gathered such little firewood as could be obtained within a fairly large radius at that high altitude, made tea, spread my raincoat on the stony shore, enjoyed my last scones and cheese, and then prepared to watch nocturnal phenomena. The little burn which enters the loch at this point, and up whose course I was to climb in the moon-lit darkness, became strangely noisy as the night came down, bringing with it a seeming deeper silence. The light had long since gone off the water, which looked cold and grey, and its receding line was high up on the eastern hills. There was naught around but bare rock, and twisted mountain juniper, and chilly grey water, the day life ended, the night life of owls and other eerie things not yet begun, and I there alone by

an expiring fire and an almost exhausted supply of firewood.

Physical Scotland had lost her charm and I turned to her imaginative treatment in literature, in the *Bothy of Tober na Vuolich*, with its talk of "Castleton, high in Braemar," the high-spirited Oxford reading party with their tutor, "the grave man, Adam," and the amber-coloured waters in which they bathed. I strained my eyes over that text in a gradually fading light in a vain endeavour to exclude from sight and thoughts a Scotland and its nocturnal phenomena which I vaguely felt were due to get the better of me. With a sort of triumphant chuckle the last of my firewood collapsed in a burnt-out heap, the light had long since gone off the hills, and I was alone in darkness high up in solitary wastes.

I drew on a heavy sweater, wrapped myself up in my raincoat, and said determinedly "I am going to sleep." Scotland determined otherwise. Kipling speaks somewhere of "rivers at night that cluck and jeer," and this product of my finely balanced hills did that, and a great deal more. It seemed to speak to me in the darkness with the many-voiced noises of all the varying rills

and waterfalls by which it tumbled down its course, its tale being one of ever-increasing woe until, when its voice was smothered by the large waters of the receiving loch, it seemed that a voice in agony had been smothered in its cry by the perpetrator of some foul deed. There had been no mention of this sort of thing in the *Bothy of Tober na Vuolich*, and I did not like it. I was getting cold, too. I got up, stamped my feet for some time to shake up the circulation, and with a muttered "This is absurd," lay down again — only to hear more noises. The night life of the high hills was getting active. There were occasional strange screams in the silence, pattering of feet and beat of wings, sounds of triumph and of death agony. Stories of Scottish fairy lore and demonology came back to me, of water kelpies and wraiths and people who are "fay," and the burn which came from my finely balanced hills was the voice which sang them all. The weather had changed quickly too. No stars shone, no moon, the wind had shifted, and obviously rain was coming. Yes, rain must be coming, I persuaded myself, and if I leave here and return to the glen down below, it will be only because the rain

would spoil the sunrise and not because I am getting horribly scared. No, certainly not, I stoutly maintained to myself, while the thought of a bothy I had passed earlier in the day came to me with tantalising frequency. I could not get it out of my head. I pictured how the good kind shepherd would have returned by this time (he was out on the hills when I passed it earlier in the day) and would be seated by a cheerful fire, his dogs at his feet, scones and oatcakes and cheese and tea at his liberal disposition, and we would sit there together and talk of those serious things on which the Scottish peasantry dwell so much. "This blasted sunrise business is no good," I muttered fretfully, turning over in my raincoat. "One wants company, somebody to talk to, and a cheerful bothy to give one shelter. One wants——" and then another scream sounded through the night, and I knew some other furry or feathery thing would see no more sunrises. That last cry completed the unnerving process. It forced me into the strong resolution of the unnerved. I decided to flee. The finely balanced hills had conquered. "I'm for the bothy," I said aloud to them, and leaving everything scattered

on the ground, turned my back on the enemy and marched breast forward—away from him. Better a flounder on a stony mountain track than that cold perspiration by a babbling mountain burn.

I got down to the bothy somehow and sank on its doorstep with a groan. It seemed then that life could have no further disappointments for me — the bothy was empty. The shooting season was due to open in a few days, and no doubt, I thought, the sheep have been taken off already and the seasonal occupation of the bothy is over. Still, there was a human touch about the place, and I lay down upon its doorstep thinking of the feet that had crossed it, and of the many miles and hills between it and the little inn I had left so gaily that morning. But I was tired after my long day in the open and my scare, and though the little burn coming down from the loch above at the foot of the precipice of the finely balanced hills seemed to carry with it all the evil voices of that demoniacal region, I soon went off to sleep.

But not for long. There seemed to be a confusion of many things at once—a tearing rip, a whining voice, a heavy weight

flung against me, the sound of a sharp voice in the darkness, and my own groan. I was on my feet at once, dazed and confused, with a sound at my feet in the darkness as of something crouching and whining excitedly. "That's a dog," I said to myself; "and that's the shepherd," I added, as a further order to the dog was shouted and I heard the scrunch of feet on the stones. I was right; the shepherd had returned, and his dog had jumped at me, seizing, fortunately, my raincoat and nothing fleshy, and was now keeping me at bay until his master had come up to see who I was. Then a complication arose. We could no more speak to each other than could the dog and I—less even. The shepherd spoke only Gaelic, of which I was blankly ignorant. I discovered afterwards that his name was Malcolm Macleod, and that he came over every year to the mainland from one of the outer islands—Harris, I believe—to pasture his master's sheep on these hills. There was no great need for talk, however. Malcolm knew all about the hills, and when he saw my pale, disordered appearance in the candle-light of his bothy, knew that I was one of these helpless Sassenach, or

lowland, tourists who will do silly things on them, and that I wished to get shelter for the night. So he and the dog and I set forth again and climbed some steep hills and crossed two little glens until we saw down below us the lights of a house, from which came the distant sound of piping. Malcolm indicated that I was to make straight for these lights, and we parted, he to return to his bothy with the sure stride of one who knows every burn and hummock in the darkness, I to have one more flounder alone.

But I withdrew all my imprecations upon Highland romance when I got to the lights and the piping. Here was what I had largely come to see. The lights came from the Ghillies' Hall, built next to a shooting lodge at the junction of two of the most important beats of the deer forest in which I had been floundering, where the deer stalkers and ghillies, with their wives and daughters, were celebrating the opening of the new shooting season. The house-party from the Lodge, including the Laird, as he was called, who owned the Forest, had already been down and danced a few rounds with the Forest servants, but now the fun was free and unconstrained by the presence of the

"gentry." They gladly broke it up, however, to look after my more urgent requirements, as to which they showed a tender practical solicitude mixed with a certain amount of laughing at sight of my blanched face and dripping garments (I had visited several of Clough's amber-coloured pools during my plunging in the darkness). I was taken into the keeper's quarters in the neighbouring Lodge, and there fitted out with dry garments, and went back to the Hall to see the wind-up of the fun.

It was the rough, good-natured fun of people who seldom get together in a crowd. They had gathered from the most distant stalkers' cottages and watchers' bothies, having come on foot to the various meeting-places, where some horse conveyance, known to Scotsmen as a "machine," had met them and conveyed them to the Hall. Strong men they were, some big, some short and squat, their kilts, for all wore the Laird's tartan, springing from their hips with a fine swing and balance, and showing their lean legs, finely shaped and wiry. Their women folk were blue or grey eyed, and all spoke with that soft, caressing voice of the Highlanders. There were eager gossiping and

callow chaffing and great bursts of laughter as some shaft went home, and a vast consumption of Athole brose, a potent thing into which whisky and honey enter, and which, I discovered, can have as distressing an effect as Clough's amber-coloured pools when taken, as I took it and them, in the wrong manner.

But gossip and chaffing and Athole brose were but interludes in the main business of the evening, the dancing. Lancers and quadrilles were there, and Strathspeys and Highland Schottisches, and that marvellous product of staid Scotland, the Eightsome Reel, in which giddy involutions and evolutions reach their very apotheosis, and solemn men have been known to shout in the intoxicating madness of its whirls, and in which, as the dancers work themselves up more and more in the excitement of cutting the figure eight, their first smiles of conscious awkwardness gradually develop into that broad, forgetful grin which adorns those who abandon themselves to the primeval joy of whirling. More than ever primeval did it seem that night, with the whirling, twining movements of those barbaric Highland costumes with their richly-coloured hunting

tartans, the bare knees flashing in the varying lights of the lamps, and the droning and the iteration and the screaming of the pipes seeming to evoke slumbering instincts of firelit clearings in solemn woods.

For the Ghillies' Hall was dominated by the piping and its piper. Officially he was Simon Fraser, chief piper to the Laird, but long ago had been nicknamed the Brocach, or the Boy, because of his mighty stature and sinews. Despite the staid carving of his Highland face, he was obviously a "character," with a scathing glance and smile about him, and a very proud consciousness of his own worth as a piper and a hero in the Forest radiating from him as he strode up and down, breathing his soul into his instrument with a look of ineffable contentment, now giving a slight twist to a drone which did not sound so sweetly as it ought, now standing still and marking some finely rhythmic beat with a beat of his left foot. When he spoke with that great voice of his the whole audience seemed to hang upon his words and then roared with delight at his angry, rough humour. But when he set the people mad with his Eightsome Reels, scathing smile and humour dropped from him

and he seemed nothing but dominating spirit, he and his pipes, become one with each other, exulting and screaming in the triumph of their incantation.

"The Ghillie Callum, John," roared the Brocach in his conversational voice, which had ever an angry snap to it, and his roar was insistently taken up by the others until they forced John Macdonald to come forward and dance the Ghillie Callum, or Sword Dance as we poor Sassenachs have it—people who told me his name being very particular as to the "John," as distinguishing him from the innumerable Simons, and Alastairs, and Donalds of the same name. And dance the Ghillie Callum he did, with a dainty tread and a marvellous agility, for a man about the sixties, of leg and foot and arm, and swing and turn, his small hill feet picking their way amongst the crossed swords, while the Brocach poured out frenzied genius and the audience marked the beats and roared applause.

"Many a time will the Brocach have piped to John," said my neighbour in great admiration, and indeed the two were men of mighty fame in the annals of Highland games.

The heat and noise of the Ghillies' Hall,

the mad excitement which the bagpipes always cause, and the Athole brose, were all beginning to affect me, coming as they did atop of Clough's amber-coloured pools and the alarms and excursions of the night. Simon Fraser must have noticed it because he came up to me some time after Macdonald's dance and said:—

"Perhaps the young gentleman would like to go to bed now? I'll be thinking I have still room in the tramp ward for a vagrant or two." There was a broad grin amongst the bystanders who overheard this favourite witticism of the Brocach's, who, when he saw I took it in proper spirit, explained he could put me up for the night, although his wife, who was ailing, and his daughters would be long since in bed, and I would have to take the tramp ward as I found it. The celebrations soon afterwards broke up, and the Brocach and I crossed over the two little burns which flowed between the shooting lodge and his house. The sky had now cleared and the hills looked friendly once more as they loomed up against the stars, but I scarcely noticed these things, nor what the Brocach was saying to me. I walked as one in a stupor, and thought of the

countless burns that pour down Scotland's mountains their floods of amber-coloured Athole brose and sing a sad dirge of the evil they have wrought, and of kelpies that dance on the marge of haunted lochs to the piping of giant ghosts that tire not nor faint; and as I sank into the cool comfort of my bed, "Scotland, Scotland," I expostulated in a tone of reprobation and delight.

CHAPTER II

THE BROCACH AND HIS PIPING

"WILL it be the Athole brose or the little burns which make the young gentleman so late?" asked a gentle voice the next morning, and I turned round to find the Brocach's wife, Elspet, regarding me with her grey eyes while she smiled her soft but tired smile. She had heard me moving about my little bedroom which opened into the parlour, known to generations of Scottish people by the eclectic name "the room," and had now come in with digestive and indigestive Scotland in the form of porridge, oat-cakes, eggs, scones, cheese, honey, and other elements of a decent breakfast.

"My man is out in the hay," said Elspet when we had introduced ourselves, "but told me you had got lost on the hills and were tired, and that I wasna to waken you till you waked yourself. But I was a wee bit feared when you didna waken to the Brocach's piping, whatever. The Brocach

will no' be very pleased if he hears you didna hear him." And Elspet again smiled her gentle, fugitive smile.

"What, the Brocach piping again so early?" I said. "What for this time?"

"The Laird spent last night with the shooting tenant in the Lodge across the water, so the Brocach had to pipe round the house this morning to waken them all up. He must always do that whenever the Laird is in residence in the Forest. And the young gentleman didna hear 'Dunraa is awa' wi' Charlie'? Well, well, the Brocach will be offended, indeed he will."

"Dunraa," I said, seized by a horrible fear, "is this the Forest of Dunraa, with Dunraa village somewhere across the hills, and Dunraa Castle somewhere in between? I never meant to come into Dunraa at all, but to go straight on to Fort William."

Elspet merely smiled again.

"Many come here who didna think of coming," she said. "It is a wild place, Dunraa, and those who come are mostly those who lose themselves as the young gentleman did. I'll be thinking the only English who came here intentionally are the English soldiers who wished to get the

Dunraa who was Chief at the Forty-five. But almost the only man left in the village was an old piper who couldna go with the others, so he got his pipes out again and played 'Dunraa is awa' wi' Charlie,' which he just composed by himself. They say that the English soldiers were very bad-tempered and swore terribly when old Hamish Cameron, as they say his name was, used to play that tune every time they marched through the village. Indeed they did. It's been the march of the Dunraa men ever since."

I sympathised strongly, after I had heard the Brocach play the march, with the temper and the swearing of the soldiers who had been marched up to these wild, outlandish places only to be mocked at by the jaunty, scathing composition of a doddering old man.

"And which part of Dunraa am I in?" I queried next.

"You are at the mouth of the Dubh Glen, or Black Glen, the only beat in the Forest which the Laird keeps in his own hands nowadays," said Elspet. "He has to let most of the Forest, with the Lodges for the different beats, but will no' let Dunraa Castle nor the Dubh Glen, indeed he won't. The

English gentry find the Dubh Glen a bit too trying for them, too, but the Laird is a grand stalker and likes the stalking best in the Dubh Glen. My man is in charge of the beat; he was with the Laird when he killed his first stag," she wound up with a certain note of simple pride.

"And the glen on the other side of the water, where the Lodge is?"

"That's Glen More, or the Big Glen, a good stalking ground but no' with such high and wild corries as the Dubh Glen. One, Lamont, is the keeper there, and lives at the back of the Lodge. The tenant is one, Mr Peake, from London, and they say he wants to get the other two beats on the Forest, which are also let, as he is very keen on the stalking and likes to have big parties up. And the Laird can no' well afford to refuse his offers, they say. The keepers and ghillies are all ready now, but there's no' much shooting done in August as the Laird never troubled much to improve the grouse, liking to keep the Forest quiet until the stags were ready. But there's Jean come in with the milk," she said, as a little girl appeared through the window, "and I must go off to get the dinner ready. You will find my man

in the field, and you will no' do very much walking the day as the heat is terrible, indeed it is," and off she went with her sweetness and graciousness.

I preferred to complete my survey of the parlour, which she had interrupted, to going out straightaway to seek her husband in the field. It was true to type of hundreds scattered over Highland Scotland. Low-roofed, it was filled with a faint, composite odour of peat and firewood and heather and bracken and fern and deer-skin and thyme and other things local and indigenous. Round the walls were photographs of Forest landscape taken and given by various tourists who had tarried there, and on the side table and mantelpiece autograph photographs of various shooting tenants or guests of the Laird, some famous in different walks of life. There were photographs, too, of Dunraa men, sometimes in groups, with shields and pikes as when they marched as a clan on to the sports ground for the autumn Highland Games; sometimes of individuals, as of the Brocach, in full war-paint, blowing mighty blasts in the piping competitions, or as, replete with kilt and plaid and skean-dhu and buckled shoes, he had appeared the three times he won

the prize for the best dressed Highlander. Round the room, too, on table or walls, were medals and cups he had won at the Games, for piping or throwing the caber in the local events, or for his excellent appearance. There was, too, the inevitable little book-case slung upon the wall. Scott was there, and Stevenson in large quantities, and St John's *Highland Sports*, a volume or two of the *Scottish Field*, Wordsworth, Carlyle, Burns, Miller of *The Old Red Sandstone*, several popular books on botany and entomology, and some modern novels, the mixed assortment of a people largely cut off from even village schools, hungry for reading, but dependent for it mainly upon the chance volumes left behind by wandering tourist or sent in grateful remembrance. "Hullo, Catholic, and no doubt Jacobite and all for Mary, Queen of Scots," I said to myself, as I pulled out *The Catholic Homes of Scotland;* and sure enough, under the suspended book-case, were hung the certificates of the confirmation by the Catholic Church of the Brocach's family—Simon (usually called Simon Beg, or little Simon, to distinguish him from his father), now aged 16, Jean, aged 14, Evan, aged 12, and Nellie, aged 10. "Church

ought to be satisfied with this normal rate of increase," I reflected, when I had calculated their present ages; and then, having refilled my pipe, went out to see Simon Fraser, called the Brocach, the Forest of Dunraa under the less terrifying influence of diurnal phenomena, and whatever else a wildish Highland spot can produce for the curious observer.

The Brocach was hard at work on the "farm," as he jocosely called the solitary field which had been cleared, as the result of Heaven knows what hard work, of the heather and bracken and stones of the steep hill which rose abruptly almost from his doorstep. In this single field he grew enough hay for winter fodder for the solitary cow which he owned, and which produced all the milk and butter necessary for the wants of the Fraser family and of the Lamonts across the water, and a fair quantity of vegetables, mostly potatoes, turnips, and other root crops, but with experiments in cabbages and other more æsthetic products. A passing tourist had named the cow "Hagar," as dwelling alone in the wilderness far from her bovine kind, and "Hagar" she had ever remained.

"Oich, oich," exclaimed the Brocach,

stopping his scythe in the middle of a sweep when he saw me enter the "farm," "warm it is working to-day, yes, yes. Simon Beg and Evan left early to bring your rucksack down from your haunted loch, but willna be back for some hours yet. The loch will no' be so dangerous in the sunlight," he concluded, and we laughed together at my flounderings of the previous night. I had, of course, told the Brocach the scene of my scare, and he had promised to send his boys up to the loch to retrieve my goods. I suppose no general likes to revisit a, for him, stricken battlefield.

The Brocach made a good figure as he stood holding his scythe upright with its point on the ground while he carefully honed the blade. Tall and stately, his massive shoulders and chest ran down to lean lines about the waist and thighs, and his wide "plus fours" of the soft, checked tweed worn by all the servants on the Forest when not in tartan, showed off the lean muscularity of his calves and the neatness of his small feet as had his kilt the previous night. There were at once enduring strength and supple elasticity in his figure, and the angry snap that was always present in his voice was belied by

the humorous light in his sharp grey eyes. His hair was already silvery, and his white beard was the usual one of his kind, short, and following the lines of the jaw but leaving the upper lip bare. He had the art of every Highlander of never seeming in dissonance with the landscape, however wild and solitary it might be.

He took some more sweeps with his scythe and again stopped to hone it. On hot days, indeed, his scythe always seemed to require a large number of honing stops, during which he carried on his conversation.

"Of course, I've no business to be here in Dunraa at all," I said during one of these honing stops. "My route lay right across the Forest of Duneir and then eventually to Fort William."

"Yes," he said, "but your haunted loch is a lonesome kind of place, and Malcolm Macleod knows well that the Dubh Glen is the nearest house to it. He will have brought many a lost tourist to us, indeed, indeed. Duneir marches, you know, with Dunraa on the ridge at the top of the Dubh Glen, and it's many and many a mile to any other house. And neither Forest likes to have tourists wandering about the march about this season

and scaring the deer from one side to the other."

This last sentence was a professional reminder to me of his duties as stalker to preserve the Forest from the intrusions of tourists who guilelessly disturb the deer. Right-of-way is a delicate subject in a deer forest, so I cast about for a new topic while the Brocach made a few more sweeps with his scythe—more honing.

"I didn't hear you piping this morning," I resumed, wishing to tantalise him and provoke the angry snap in his voice. "You must have played very softly." He looked at me pityingly.

"Some folk will sleep through the Trump of Doom. But it was so much the worse for you as it will be for them, for I'm a grand piper," he said with magnificently simple pride. "It came a sort of natural to me when I was a boy, so the present Laird's father sent me to a piping school at Inverness. There was one, Mathieson, an old pipe sergeant-major, instructor there at the time, and he always did say that it would be a terrible loss to the army if I didna join a Highland regiment. I dinna care much for exertion, however, and said I wad just be

biding in the Forest, and so I came back and have piped ever since for the Laird and his father before him. But when I've piped the Laird and the others to dinner in the Castle to-night, I'll pipe to ye—ay, I'll pipe to ye," he wound up threateningly, and I looked forward to some noisy entertainment.

I was on the point of asking the Brocach something about the lore of deer forests and stalking, but just then Mrs Fraser came to the door and called him in to dinner. He gratefully laid his scythe down and strode through the "farm," carefully leaving over the honing as a pleasant introduction to the afternoon's exertions. I determined to have a dilatory tramp up the Dubh Glen.

The meeting-place of the Dubh Glen and Glen More was fair to look upon from the top of the little ridge which nearly closed the entrance to the former, with its narrow opening just sufficient to allow a passage for the Dubh Burn and the track, but affording very good protection for the Frasers' cottage against the north wind. The high hills which divide the Dubh Glen from Glen More here drop down abruptly, leaving a fairly wide circular level beloved by the grazing Hagar and threaded by the Dubh Burn

and the Glas Alt, or Grey Burn, coming down Glen More, to meet just at the entrance to the clump of trees surrounding Glen More Lodge. In the immediate foreground was the Brocach's house, stoutly built and tucked up against the sheltering low ridge; its "farm" showing up as a bright patch of colour amidst the surrounding dun heather and pine and scree. Across the two burns, with their little wooden bridges with a rail only on one side, was the dark carpet of pines surrounding Glen More Lodge, betrayed only by a faint wisp of smoke rising amidst the trees; and beyond this again the high ramparts of the hills on the far sides of the Dubh Glen and Glen More swept round towards each other to mark the glen with its carriage road leading past the Castle of Dunraa down to the village and beyond that, whither one wished, into civilisation. A pleasant place this meeting of the two glens, a human touch amidst the surrounding wastes, and always, when there was any sunshine at all, catching all the brightness obtainable.

A different story, however, when one had dropped over the ridge into the Dubh Glen proper. Its axis and the configuration of its

flanking hills were such that it never seemed to be flooded with sunshine, even on the brightest days, throughout its whole, not very long, length. Always some part of it was left dark and forbidding and solitary, with lonely little flats at intervals where the Dubh Burn seemed to lose all sense of falling down a height and lay seeming dead amongst the rank grass, to leap later over its clean, stony bottom as if glad to have escaped from the dead hand clutching it at parts of its course. There were but few trees, and these mostly blanched and stunted, in the Dubh Glen, which gave no long vistas up its course but with great scree slopes, and falls of rock, and secret recesses in the hills, on which the sun always seemed to shine in but fitful, bleak, wintry gleams. The sound of falling water seemed to voice the solitariness of that glen which was to get such a hold of me, and its spirit seemed to be expressed by a golden eagle which I caught through my glasses that first day, hovering high up with a great spread of wing, brooding and cruel. Even the wildest Highland glen is familiar enough, however, at its lower levels, and the Dubh Glen, too, was almost gay with masses of bedstraw, white and yellow, in clumps around

the boulders marking the track, and tormentil amongst the heather, and stiff bog-asphodel and St John's wort and sundew amongst the marshy places, and Alpine lady's mantle with the digitate leaves it modifies its lowland format into at these higher altitudes, and, for the cunning eye, the green orchis snuggling amidst the green grass. Above, on the higher levels, I was later to find many a sub-Alpine species gleaming amongst moss or by waterfalls in cool clefts of the rocks.

But now came Simon Beg and Evan, bringing with them my retrieved *impedimenta* from the loch, fine upright boys, true to type, frank and courteous, with nothing awkward or peasantish about their shyness and reserve, and with "father" writ large upon them in feature and physique.

"Hullo, Simon Beg and Evan, got all my stuff?" I asked them.

"Yes," they said with one accord, pointing to the burden which they had apportioned between them, in proportion, it seemed, to their tale of years.

"Any kelpies or wraiths lying about?"

"No," they replied with one accord, nudging each other and looking at each other for confidence to laugh.

"Was Malcolm Macleod in his bothy when you passed it?"

"No," they replied with one accord.

"He'll soon be shutting down for the season and taking his sheep home again," I suggested.

"Yes," they replied with one accord, and I was beginning to think, because of their monosyllabic replies, that Highlanders were not so very different from two Lowland Scots whom I once saw meet on a lonely highroad. "Ay," said one of them by way of greeting in passing. "Ay," said the other by way of acknowledgment, and then muttered when he had passed, "Talkative body, yon," as if in passionate disapproval of loquacity. But Simon Beg and Evan soon found their tongues and were little storehouses of information, and, later, I was to find them most useful in my amateur botanical explorations. They did not know the names of many flowers, though they never forgot them once they had heard them, but, given a fairly accurate description of form and colour and leaf, they could pretty nearly always take me to a habitat of the desired specimen which their keen eyes had noted in their ever-observant wanderings. We had promised

ourselves many joint excursions by the time we reached home.

When I had finished dinner that evening, the Brocach had already come back from piping the Laird and his guests into the dining-room, a musical *aperitif*, and I joined the family in the kitchen.

"Sit back and make room for the gentleman," said Elspet when I entered, and Jean and Nellie, the two daughters, pushed back their chairs from the open fireplace so that I could join the circle. We talked a little about the Laird's guests and their doings, always a subject of profound interest to forest servants, and then I again ruffled the Brocach by referring to his not having piped loud enough for me to hear him that morning.

"Ye'll hear me now," he said grimly, rising and seizing his pipes.

I did. Simple people believe that Highland cottages are stoutly built against the blasts of God: they are wrong, they are strongly built against the musical entertainments of their tenants. The Brocach threw his pipes across his shoulders with a fine movement, and, hugging the bag under his left arm with infinite affection, blew mighty exhalations into it until it was fully distended.

Then his fingers ran up and down the chanter, horrible wails and grunts and screams being emitted as the Brocach tested his notes, sometimes keeping on one note while he adjusted the drones so that the sound came more smoothly and to his satisfaction. When all were sounding sweetly to his ear he gave the pipes another jaunty toss into position, hugged the bag even more affectionately, and breaking into "Dunraa is awa' wi' Charlie," proceeded to march up and down the kitchen, which his mighty figure seemed to fill, while dishes rattled and the window shook and the air was convulsed with battering waves of sound. The Brocach was in full blast.

Never had I heard such a piping. From that opening Dunraa March he took us through the whole repertory of what the pipes can achieve. There were reels, and Strathspeys, and Ghillie Callums, with a swing and a rhythm to them. There were pibrochs full of wild regret—the regret of Chieftains leaving their homes after the Jacobite rebellions, the regret of emigrants playing their farewell ere embarking for Canada or some other far shore, the regret of the mourners as they followed the bier

to the grave, bier of Chief or of comrade slain in battle, regret for deep impulses no man may give word to. The voice of the army was there, with "The Barren Rocks of Aden," in which a Highland regiment's disgust with its station is expressed; or "The 79th's Farewell to Gibraltar," and many another Farewell of many another Highland regiment to stations where it has lain. There was that thing misnamed a pibroch, "The Pibroch of Donuil Dhu," which is no lament, but an outpouring of frenzied joy that knows no bounds. Donuil must have "lifted" a lot of cattle during some raid upon the lowlands to put him into such good fettle, and one can almost imagine the cattle marching behind him with their tails gaily up, proud to be captured by such a "braw" raider. There was simple domesticity, as in "The Muckin' o' Geordie's Byre"; and the Brocach wound up with "Invercauld," the march of the Farquharsons, a downright composition, in which the Farquharsons seem to be marching with a purpose. In between he had sometimes played no stereotyped tune at all, but had merely revelled in an exhibition of his virtuosity, taking a little melody and then developing it and embellishing it

with all manner of improvisations, embellishments which the world at large may call *appoggiatura* but which to a piper are known as "warblers," and skill in which stamps him as a master.

The Brocach was on his mettle that night, playing for the first time before a stranger who had not been wakened by his matutinal blasts. He was still in the full Highland dress in which he had played the Castle people in to dinner, the many medals his piping had won him glittered on his chest, and the richly-coloured silken streamers streamed from the reed drones of his full-dress pipes. Sometimes he stepped blithely and jauntily when he played the dancing music, sometimes he stood still and marked time with his foot, sometimes his step was slow as when he played a lament, he and his instrument one with each other and both one with the melody. And always the kilt was as faithful a reflex of the music as is a dog's tail of its owner's frame of mind, swinging with an *insouciant* whisk from the hips when the piper stepped blithely, all adroop and forlorn when he lamented unutterable things. Truly, a "braw" piper: Alan Breck Stewart grudgingly admitted to his piping rival, "Ay, ye

have music," but he, too, would have ceased to be grudging at such a performance. There was an expiring groan as the Brocach pressed the last of the air out of the bag, and then he dropped his beloved pipes on the table and turned sharply to me.

"Na, did ye hear that?" he asked, with that angry snap in his voice which Scotsmen can use when they mean to convey merely that they are well pleased with themselves. The other Frasers all started laughing, the Brocach finally joining them, as it was well known to them all that my sleepy heedlessness of the morning had stung him into almost excelling himself. We sat late that night, the Brocach being a great talker from the very beginning of a new acquaintanceship, and expounding the lore of pipes and piping and pipers with great enthusiasm and appreciation of gifted rivals. He continued all the night to speak to me in that offended angry tone of his, but with a mischievous gleam in his eye which showed he was pleased with my admiration. When, at a late hour, the Brocach suggested it was bed-time, Elspet said with a quiet smile, "Yes, it is time we went home," at which the Brocach grinned hugely, and his fourfold offspring each showed

appreciation of the remark. I had seen this reference to "going home" raise a smile the previous evening in the Ghillies' Hall when said in the Brocach's presence, and wondered what secret meaning was attached to it. I discovered it only long afterwards when I asked the Brocach's dancing friend, John Macdonald, the inner significance of it.

"Yes, there's a secret meaning," he answered, slily smiling in turn. "Let's sit at the fire and have a smoke, and I'll tell ye about how the Brocach went home.

"It will now be some fifteen years ago," he began, "when the Laird was still terribly free with his money and greatly given to that bettin' and wagerin' which have caused him all his trouble since. He was sittin' one night wi' Colonel Grant, him that owns Duneir, which marches with us at the head of the Dubh Glen, and they and the other gentlemen of the party had all been playing cards and drinkin' too much liquor. The Games was just about due then, and the Laird and Duneir got very argumentative about the qualities of the Dunraa men and the Duneir men at the Games, and as to which had won most prizes in the past. One thing led on to another, and at the end the Laird, who

was always terribly proud of his men, said he would back six of his men to pull twelve of the Duneir men at a tug-of-war, the bet being a hundred pounds. Duneir said he didna require favours or like pickin' up money thrown away, but he would back six of his men to pull six of the Dunraa men for a hundred pounds. The Laird said he didna like found money either, but at last it was settled that there should be a six-a-side tug-of-war at the end of the official programme of the Games, the bet bein' a hundred pounds, and the money bein' held by a Captain Nicholson, him that was later killed in the Boer War. He was a grand shot, the Captain.

"Well, the Games day came, and an angrier man than the Brocach was by the afternoon you just couldna well have found anywhere. He had been beaten in the piping competition, placed only second, and you just couldna get two civil words from him one after the other. And aye when the Laird, who had made him captain of the tug-of-war team, met him, he shook his heid and said, 'Brocach, man, I'm terribly disappointed wi' ye,' and that just set the Brocach off again, and there seemed to be no holding him at all. But the Games

went on until the programme was finished, and everybody lined up to see the tug-of-war. It was known that the Laird and Duneir had each wagered a hundred pounds, and as the Duneir men stood there stripped, and they had saved themselves during the Games, we all knew it was going to be a very big pull indeed if the Laird wasna to lose.

"The Laird stood amongst us holding the rope on his arm while we got ready, and then, as he gave it to the Brocach, who was to be the anchor on our side, 'It was very sad about the pipin', Brocach,' he said, and the Brocach just got flaming red with temper. 'Give me the rope, Laird, and we'll see who's going to be sad,' he said wi' that angry snap o' his, and, as he put the loop over his shoulders, the Laird walked away, but sayin', so that the Brocach could hear him, 'It was very disappointin', though,' and the Brocach looked as though he would just burst.

"Well, we lined up on our side of the mark. I was first on the rope, then came Alastair Grant, then John Grant, him whose son is now in Canada, then Donald Fraser, then Hector Lamont, who's dead these two years, and then the Brocach.

"Captain Nicholson gave the signal, and

somehow the Duneir men got in the first pull. Alastair Grant lost his footing and came down almost full length on the grass, with his weight off the rope like, and I could hear the Brocach shout with a terrible voice, 'What are you doing down there amongst the grass, Alastair Grant? Is this a time to go grazing?' Alastair got up again and pulled, but still the Duneir men were drawin' us on, the Laird standin' by quite quiet and watchin' a'thing.

"'You're givin' way, Brocach,' he says quietly, and I could hear the Brocach say, 'Laird! Laird!' as though rebuking him for want of faith. Howbeit, we steadied up and held the Duneir men, although we had given a lot of ground. I hadna much breath left for conversation but managed to say, 'We're a bit too near the mark, Brocach,' and he said back, 'Well, just come back a wee bit frae it,' and with that he took a tighter grip of the rope and leaned upon it, and we a' felt that some inhuman strength was pulling us back. The Brocach eased his pull when we got back to the footholds we started from, and then just contented himself with leaning his weight upon the rope, and there we a' stood tugging and rugging and no side making any pro-

gress at all, and Colonel Grant rampaging about beside his men and trying to cheer them on, and the Laird standin' ever so quiet and sayin' not one single word except the Brocach seemed to be giving way.

"The Duneir men were doin' most of the pulling, we just holding on and letting them pull a dead weight, and then when they all seemed terribly red in the face and breathin' terrible hard the Brocach eased his weight on the rope and that set the Duneir men tugging and rugging harder than ever. The Brocach let them pull us forwards bit by bit, but takin' care all the time that they had to pull two inches for every inch they won. Then I heard the Brocach say, 'Where are ye, John?' and 'I'm nearin' the mark,' I says, and at that the Brocach cries, 'Stand fast, Dunraa,' and we a' pulled again until we had the Duneir men stopped. Then the Brocach (so the Laird told me afterwards), when he found we were steadied, took his hands aff the rope and leaned back upon it, swaying slightly as though testing the weight on it. Then I heard him roar, 'Do you see me, Laird?' 'Ay,' says the Laird, 'I'm watching ye.' Then the Brocach gave another roar, 'I'm goin' home now, Duneir!'

and with that he grips the rope with both his hands and leans back upon it till all the blood in his body seemed to be in his face and ye would have thought the veins on his temples would burst, and he pulled and pulled in one steady pull till we were nearly off our feet and the Duneir men coming after us falling and slipping and never able to check the pull at all, at all, and all the people cheerin' and cheerin', and the Laird rinnin' about like mad, and we never stopped till Captain Nicholson gave the signal, when the Duneir men were a' in a heap across the mark. Then the Laird rins up to the Brocach, holdin' out his hand to congratulate him, but the Brocach first asks, 'Are ye still disappointed wi' me, Laird?' and they both fall alaughing, and the crowd lifts up the Brocach and carries him around the ground. He got mixed up with his liquor that night and wandered into the wrong glen on the way home, and is still terrible wroth when you speak to him about it. But no so wroth, I'll be thinking, as are the Duneir men to this day when ye ask them if they are going home—no indeed."

John Macdonald indulged in a series of risible grunts when he had told the story, this epic of Dunraa Forest and its wrathful

giant being a great favourite amongst the other stalkers and ghillies, and a reference to it never failing to raise a smile.

This wrathful giant, his piping genius, his kilted magnificence, his angers, and his essential kindliness, had quite captivated my imagination. There were, too, a sweetness about the soft-voiced, grey-eyed Elspet, shy in her method of approach as were her family, and a dark glory about the Dubh Glen, which I felt that very first day that I could not resist. Highland Scotland had been revealed to me in a splendid flash. I had to leave the Brocach, his pipes and his family, the next morning, and pursue my original route to Fort William, whence one goes to Skye and the other islands, where are loneliness, and tidal waters with the smell of sea-wrack amongst the inner recesses of the hills, and sunsets which, like the people, seem to be not of the coarser world we know. But I came back many times during the ensuing years, gradually getting a full insight into all the nooks and crannies of the Forest of Dunraa, geographically and psychologically; sometimes going up to finish some poor book or other in peaceful but concentrated energy, sometimes to correct dreary proof-sheets

amidst soothing scenes, at other times for the mere sake of botanically pottering about. Gradually, too, I came to be accepted by the dwellers in the Forest, an exclusive fraternity, opening its heart only to those who go to it in all naturalness and simplicity. I was obviously, because of the strangeness of my favourite pursuits, regarded as "harmless," and people began to tell me stories of the Forest, and little bits of gossip, and gradually to initiate me into their lives and ways and troubles. When Elspet received inquiries from Glasgow or thereabouts as to the possibility of her letting her parlour and "wee" bedroom for a week or two, she always, after I had been accepted by the family, wrote to me asking if I was thinking of coming up before she let them. That I had been accepted by the whole Forest was first revealed to me in the chemist's shop in the village of Dunraa, where one usually buys stamps, postcards, and photographic materials. Two stalking friends of mine were standing there when I entered one afternoon to buy some writing-paper, my entry being unnoticed.

"I hear that writin' body is up again," said one of them, discussing the day's gossip.

I hurried out of the shop lest I should be discovered and the stalkers become embarrassed, but with a pleasurable glow of satisfaction. I had been referred to descriptively. I had been accepted.

CHAPTER III

A HIGHLAND QUARREL

THERE is a Scotland other than that of Glasgow and the hard-jawed men who "get on." Entrenched behind the "Highland Line," which is the Grampians, this other Scotland has a different tradition and values other things. It clings to the patriarchal tradition, though the clan spirit is long dead. It loves its landowners to be men of lineage, men who hold commissions in the Services or executive posts in the Empire. It loves men having authority, men who govern. And as with its landowners, so with its landowners' guests. If they are city men, banker or broker or merchant, good, they bring useful money to barren places, but their merchanting and trafficking do not interest Highland Scotland, which repays it only with service. Its devotion is given to the military men, the governing men, the heirs of the tribal chiefs.

Glasgow and the industrial belt of Scotland

do not interest it. Though Highland Scotland provides strongholds for Anglicanism and Presbyterianism, its tradition is essentially Catholic and primitive. Its memory dwells upon the Catholic past, still feels for Mary and her conflicts with the too-convinced Knox, and holds fast by sad, far-off, fruitless things. Loyalty and lost causes are the fibre of its being. While Glasgow talks of shares and iron, and Lowland Scotland as a whole of success and "getting on," Highland Scotland still thinks in terms of grouse and deer, of athletic skill and cunning knowledge of hills and their tracks, of sheep and their shepherding and their pasturing. While the world, in short, claims to have progressed, Highland Scotland has stood by the primitive things of all the earth, hunting and pastoral pursuits, and the investing with a halo of those who have won its devotion.

This other Scotland, lying to the north and the west of the Grampians, and typified by its deer forests, seizes the imagination powerfully. Here, alone in our island, is to be found a hint of that Wild which can still fascinate us all. Here alone great empty distance and hanging woods and beckoning pass and lonely waters utter a challenging

call to seek them out. The wild red deer roam it at large, and bird and beast are shy and furtive, resenting human intrusion, which, they know, comes but to measure its skill and to kill. Fishing and stalking and shooting, pasturage and walking and touring, these ancient things of the earth, are there still dominant, as they were in the beginning of things. Pagan, too, are the deer forests. Rock and tree and waterfall seem to assume personality. Great silence is there, and repose, and the impenetrable peace wraps you round in all friendliness until you begin to people these places with gods of a smiling aspect which make of our intellectual conceptions of the gods and their cruel exactions but a meddling intrusion upon the universal peace. Pagan, too, is the life there, and human is the social intercourse.

There is something very gentlemanly about the treatment of Scottish landowners by their retainers. There is no servility in it, but a real deference to manners and culture, which yet allows of a complete independence and readiness to disagree on political questions or to thresh out, in the law courts, an unfortunate difference in the interpretation of, say, a farm lease, as a matter of

intellectual principle, the result leaving no personal bitterness. Lairds and retainers are each aware of the inherent worth of themselves and of the other side, and so there arises a relationship which makes of our industrial politics and their clash of interests something selfish and inhuman. When this relationship is thrown against the background of a deer forest an added dignity is given to that which arises from all work connected with the land. It assures to the humblest forest dweller a position, a social standing, and a human intercourse, which no highly paid city artisan can ever hope to attain.

For life, as seen by the Brocach from the standpoint of Dunraa Forest, had been a brightly flowing current of manly work and genial intercourse with some of the greater ones of the earth. Driving sheep down the drove roads in his younger days, and stalking deer, and knowing mountain tracks, and revelling in these primal tasks, smack in themselves of that sane living close to the earth which aristocracy has ever kept alive for all its immersion in letters or town or civil strife. And the Brocach felt himself very much of an aristocrat. His family had

generations of service to Dunraa behind it. His house and small income were assured him, and there was no haggling or economic strife in his life. The Laird, who was a retired Colonel, and his father, the General, had both entertained royally, and their guests had ever been army and naval men, and civil servants, men who did things in India and Egypt, fought river campaigns or governed provinces, talked imperially in the House of Commons or "proconsuled" in the House of Lords. The colour of their lives threw its reflection upon the Brocach's. He met them when they came to Dunraa to throw off the cares of their careers and their responsibilities and to expand in that pagan life. He saw the great men look at him with admiring eyes as he piped them to dinner. He saw them obey his commands implicitly when out stalking, crawling forward when he told them to do so, stopping and crouching at his command, withholding their shot, with whatever impatience, until he, the Brocach, thought the time and opportunity were fit. In the long intervals of waiting while stalking, or in chance conversations, they told him of imperial problems, and adventures, and social gossip, and spoke with intimacy of the great

names and events appearing in the Brocach's newspapers, and listened with attention and admiration to his intelligent talk, and laughed with real enjoyment at his comedy which had no buffoonery in it, and there was a splendid feeling of equality with interesting people engaged in the spacious sport of hunting. There was neither snobbery nor condescension in this relationship: neither side was capable of it; neither would have accepted it. For the Brocach, these people were but fulfilling an elementary duty of "the gentry," that of being a toy for the humbler classes. Many a time, when the Brocach read in some newspaper that some high servant of the State had been promoted, or recalled for a blunder, have I heard him say, with genuine interest in the matter, "Eh, man, and so Sir John has been recalled. I mind fine how, when stalking with him up the west side of the glen there, it must now be three years forby, he——" and there would follow a story of the man who had brought some colour and atmosphere into the glen, and who was sure of kindly criticism there for all his blunder.

This long, pleasant intercourse with "the gentry," known all his life and carried on with an ease inherited from his father and

many before him, had bitten deep into the Brocach. City life, the artisan life he would have known had he not been on the land, to him was mean and menial. His had been a free life, based firmly on the land in one of its most picturesque forms, knowing nothing of diverging class interests, and nothing of commercial crises and strikes and lock-outs and wages bargaining, and the savagery of the industrial rule which makes of the savage strugglings of the artisan class a necessity. To him, all that aspect of life was incomprehensible, and a very great outrage upon his Highland dignity and independence.

Your city artisan knows nothing of attachment to man or institution: the very soul of the Brocach clove to Dunraa. To him it was a storied place. There were stories of the Dunraa family, there were stories of great stalking exploits, there were stories of poachers, and stories of clan warfare, of Highland folklore and demonology. A great roll of distinguished names had come and left its memory in Dunraa, and the place glowed with a steady blaze in the Brocach's imagination, who saw Dunraa fulfilling an important place in the world's affairs. Did not the great State servants come to it and obey him? And

always shining brightly in that imaginative glow was the figure of the beloved Laird.

"Laird" is not a Highland term, and the owner of Dunraa had first been so named during his Eton days, the name persisting through his regimental service and percolating to the Highlands, by means of guests, long before he had succeeded to the estate. He was typical of his class of Highland landowners, whose members rarely achieve more than regimental distinction, but whose names and deeds, within that limited sphere, are enduring. He had served with his regiment, a Highland one, in India and Egypt, his military exploits being attested to by various medals, his skill in Indian *shikar* by various heads presented to the regimental mess or adorning the hall of Dunraa Castle, trophies from queer places in the Himalayas and the Pamirs. His service to the Empire finished, he had passed into the great oblivion which follows such a career, and since then had led the life of an active and public-spirited Highland gentleman. He was a member of the County Council, convener of its Roads Committee, member of various parliamentary commissions on afforestation, land settlement, protection of wild birds, salmon, and

similar matters on which he had great authority. Though poverty was now his lot, as of so many of his class, he was still the leading figure over a wide district at games, or ball, or house-party, his military prestige and territorial authority being splendidly backed by his erect and strong but supple figure, and the keen, commanding face with the grey side whiskers, with the strength of its mouth, surmounted by the hawk-like nose, tempered by the humour in his eyes.

Between the Laird and the Brocach there had always been a real friendship. In the Laird, the Brocach found that military prestige and personal worth to which his clannish spirit could cleave; in the Brocach, the Laird, with his keenness for all things Highland, found the very apotheosis of what the Highlands can produce—the Brocach, with his piping genius, his magnificent appearance, his intelligence, his skill as a stalker, his pride and his quick temper and angry voice, which the Laird knew how to appreciate. Nor could the Laird forget that the giant had been with him when he stalked and shot and "gralloched" his first stag, a very great experience, and ever since, when at home, loved to have the Brocach about him. When

reduced circumstances had forced the Laird to let all the beats in the Forest but one, he had retained the Dubh Glen in his own possession, so that no profane voices could call upon the Brocach's services. That would have hurt both master and man.

"I've piped for the Laird," the Brocach said to me one night, "I've been ghillie to him, I've stalked for him, I've shepherded for him, I've gaffed salmon for him, I've doffed my hat to him, and I've scolded him, indeed I have, and there's not a thing I wouldna do for him, indeed there isn't," a concluding assertion of which the Laird was as aware as was his piper.

"Have you shepherded for him too, Brocach?" I asked in some surprise, there being then no sheep in Dunraa.

"Shepherded?" he roared at me. "Have you never been to the Falkirk Tryst and heard tell of the Dunraa sheep and the Brocach who brought them there? Man, man! Many and many's the mile I've wandered behind the Dunraa sheep in my young days when the Dunraa grazing was the best in the Highlands and the bothies between here and Falkirk just that rotten and broken-down like, that the silly sheep

would sometimes look at me as I lay in them and wonder why we clipped their wool when the shepherds had to be near frozen at nights. And every spring and autumn, as I took the Laird's sheep or his father's before him down the drove roads to the Tryst, the lowland bodies would come to see us as we passed. And when we got down to Falkirk the news would go round that the Dunraa sheep had come in, and the whole Tryst, buyer and seller and shepherd, would come to see the pens where they lay, for the Dunraa pasture was very good and the Dunraa sheep known all over amongst people who have nothing but sheep in their heads. Yes, yes, good were the Dunraa sheep."

"Perhaps the Tryst wished to see you, too, Brocach?" I suggested to him.

"Ay, ay, they were good judges of man and beast at the Tryst," he granted in a mollified voice and with that satisfied laugh of his, and from his subsequent talk of trysting experiences it was easy to see how the great giant and his splendid ways had been a "character" in drab Falkirk of coal and iron.

"And what happened to the grazing, then, that the sheep are all gone?"

"Na, that's a long story," came with a

twinge of sadness from the piper. "Ye see, the landowners all discovered that the letting value of a deer forest or grouse moor was worth more than the sheep when stalking and shooting became so fashionable and all the folk in London must come up here and go rinnin' about with a gun. So the sheep all got cleared off as disturbing the game, and many a croft and many a shepherd disappeared for the same reason."

"Ay," took up Elspet, "the shooting gentry and the tourists between them have made great demands upon the Highlands. Things are no' what they was. I was born and brought up on what is now the village golf course, it that belongs to the Dunraa Arms Hotel, as my father was afore me and his afore him, it being then a croft. And now there's no' a single stone of our croft left, and the patches of fields we had just wiped out and there's nothing but golf and golf. Many a family has had to leave these parts, indeed, indeed. And yet, though there's fewer folk, there's more money in Dunraa village this day than there was then," she wound up, shaking her head doubtfully over a simple economic mystery.

"And what does the Laird say to all

this?" I queried, wondering why a splendid landowner permitted it.

"The Laird will no doubt know what he is doing," grunted the Brocach, loyally concealing the secret dread which haunted him, as it no doubt did the Laird, and which I discovered only when it could no longer be hidden.

It will, perhaps, always be a moot point as to whether we ought to speak of "settling" the Highlands or of "condemning" people who have heard the call of the cities to live there, but the removal of families from their homes and their conversion into the golf course made me look at Dunraa with a new interest. In every glen in Dunraa, as in the Highlands generally, were to be seen the markings of foundations of houses long since disappeared, and patches of grass, rapidly returning to heather, with vetch and trefoil and clover flowering in the waste, all that remains of what was once cultivation, but now going back to deer and grouse. Heaven knows where all the people have gone to. The army got some, and their bones lie wherever England has held or extended a frontier. New Zealand has them, Canada has them, they are lost to us in America,

they are up-country in Australia; but the memory of a mist-sodden glen or island is with them, and will no doubt form a stronger link than any that can be devised by human legislation. They are ugly to see, these marks of a former cultivation, and I was destined to realise their meaning vividly.

For the Brocach, however, there was no such moot point. He and his forebears had served Dunraa from generation unto generation, and he was determined that the service should be continued by all his family. Other stalkers might have ambitions to send their sons to Glasgow University or to a Glasgow office; for the Brocach, no future could be fairer than that which showed Simon Beg and Evan graduating from ghillies to full-fledged stalkers, and Jean and Nellie marrying into the ranks of the profession.

Why not? He himself had been very happy in the Dubh Glen. In his own words he "didna like exertion," and had been quite happy to settle down there after his wandering, shepherding days. His house was within easy walking reach of Dunraa Castle, and often did the Laird come for a walk up his favourite glen, when the Brocach was called upon to go with him as talker about the Falkirk Tryst or

queer Scottish characters, and expounder of views on the state of the world, and as listener to tales of the Laird's campaigning days and his hunting abroad, his listening being punctuated frequently with his favourite exclamation of "Laird! Laird!" said by way of expostulation or surprise. It was from the beginning of his Dubh Glen days that the Brocach had really entered into his own, enhancing his great reputation as piper and "character" with prowess at the Games, putting the weight, tossing the caber, and, as we have seen, pulling the neighbouring Duneir Forest with great glee and skill.

It was in the Dubh Glen, too, that most of his married life had been spent. Elspet, the daughter of the crofter whose work is now a golf course, had passed through the usual experience of her kind—domestic service first in the Dunraa Arms Hotel, and then with the Laird at the Castle or his London house. Elspet was never strong, however, and though she bore the Brocach four children, it was all done with infinite pain and difficulty. She had some internal trouble which often necessitated a visit to the Glasgow Infirmary, or a stay with the Brocach's cousin, a member of the Partick Division of the Glasgow police

force, from which experiences she came back looking frailer and more wan than before, but with, if possible, something even more gentle and winning about her. Grey was Elspet's hair when I first met her, grey her eyes, and, did voices have colour, then hers would have been grey, too, so soft and caressing was it, so contented and demure. Gaelic had been her mother tongue, as it had been her husband's, and often when I have come upon the two alone have I found them talking the dying language.

In the Dubh Glen, too, the Brocach had found his one enemy, his neighbour, Donald Lamont, across the water at the Lodge. The strained relations existing between them were enough to make one almost despair of human sweetness and light. Here were two men living alone in a wilderness, the nearest house to them, apart from the Castle, being in Dunraa village, some ten miles distant. There seemed to be a complete absence of any possible grounds of friction, and all possible grounds for sociability, and yet these two men loathed each other with a most surpassing loathing. Sunday after Sunday they would go down the carriage road that began at Lamont's door, to service in the village,

but never did they go together, the Brocach even skirting round the wood which surrounded the Lodge and getting on to the road below it, not wishing even to pass Lamont's threshold. When, by any unforeseen chance, they did meet, the meeting was as likely as not to end in a dispute.

There were temperamental grounds for the quarrel, although I never discovered who began it. Lamont had none of the clan spirit and Highland spirit which infused the Brocach's soul. He served the Laird with no greater zest than he served the shooting tenant of his beat, Mr Peake, or fussed around the "feckless" tourists from Dunraa village who sometimes drove up to the Lodge of an afternoon, had tea from the Lamonts, and drove back again. Lamont liked all these people and was rather forward and snobbish when meeting the "gentry." The Brocach cared not a jot for that type of pleasantly ineffectual visitor, but was interested only in those who roughed it on the hills and passes and showed a genuine interest in Highland things. On Games Days Lamont fussed about amongst the fashionable tourist crowd which thronged the ground, liking to push his way amongst them, while the Brocach reserved himself for

the Chiefs and expected ordinary mortals to come to him rather than that he should go to them.

All the fussiness and somewhat cheap snobbishness which so jarred upon the Brocach's Highland pride might have been forgiven, however, had the two men only been able to keep off religion. The Brocach was Catholic, Lamont Presbyterian, and this difference was mortal. They would argue about it, and about Mary and John Knox, and the Stuarts, and the Jacobite movement and rights, the Brocach arguing with a great deal of fire and conviction, Lamont usually introducing phrases about Papists and Popery and persecutions and superstitions in a most irritating manner. I never knew who was at fault, but the conduct of the two men after a fresh debate about God and His peace was quite different, Lamont usually indulging in outspoken criticisms of the Brocach, and forbidding his boy, Donald Beg, and his housekeeper, for he was a widower, to mix again with the Brocach's family ; the Brocach, on the other hand, saying not a word to anyone, but walking up and down outside his house, with rapid paces, his kilt, if he was wearing it, whisking from his hips with

nervous, impatient jerks, indicating the fires burning within the Brocach's heart. I never heard the Brocach refer in any way to Lamont, with whom I rarely mixed owing to the social difficulty.

But, except when God visited the neighbours shrouded in these highly-charged theological clouds, all was happiness and goodwill in the Dubh Glen. Lamont was an exception. With all the other stalkers and dwellers in the Forest, the Brocach was on the best of terms. He moved as a hero amongst them, as by right, and they loved to tell stories of him. They had grown old in the service of Dunraa, the Brocach and these others, and seen each other develop, and formed a tight corps with a common tradition and a common fund of experiences and stories and interest in all pertaining to Dunraa. Against that background of the Laird, the Laird's guests, and the other stalkers, all men with a great understanding of his prowess and the quality of his heroics, what wonder that the Brocach, despite the loneliness of the glens, regarded city life as friendless and menial? What wonder that he wished to see his family grow up in that atmosphere of security and glory?

It was a life which suited the Brocach admirably. He "didna like exertion," just as no "noble savage" has ever liked it when required on mere work, and, except for a brief period each year, there was no need for him to exert himself. A silly tourist, not knowing his way and wishing to be funny, once quoted the lines—

> "Oh that the peats would cut themselves,
> The fish leap on the shore,
> That I could lie unto my bed
> For aye and evermore,"

a quotation, however, which was taken by the Brocach, who had an uneasy conscience on these matters, as being of personal application, and brought confusion upon the head of the silly tourist.

Winter was a period of profound rest and study and reflection. But with the coming of spring came new activities, which developed in a gradually mounting *crescendo* until the next winter set in. There was flood damage to be seen to, bridges swept away, bridle paths broken, tracks on the high levels rendered unsafe, all the manifold small-scale engineering of a deer forest to be supervised and repaired after the ravages of winter and the thaw. This involved much hill walking on

the part of the Brocach and his offspring, to be recompensed later by a sweet revenge when the labourers came up to repair damage reported on by him. He loved to see these labourers come up with their supplies, and to gossip with them and to treat them with royal hospitality, and then to sigh with infinite content as he thought of how they must perform their laborious work far up in the heights while he remained in the comfortable hollows. There came, too, the work on the "farm," the hoeing and delving and sowing, and, later, the harvesting, and the "casting" of peats, and the gathering of firewood supplies for the winter, all grievous tasks performed mostly in the heat of a Highland glen in summer, with tormentings by flies, the tickly ones and the biting ones, and many an "oich! oich," and "well, well, indeed, indeed," at the long agony of his work, rendered longer by the anxiety with which he sought for any pretext for a stoppage. Pastoral work, and hunting, and athletics, and piping, these were the proper pursuits of gentlemen, and the Brocach was sorely irked by the menial tasks of a settled agriculturist.

And, best of all, there came the visitors. Sometimes they were walking tourists, just

passing through and wanting sleeping quarters for the night, sometimes they wished to stay a few weeks, sometimes they merely passed in the course of the day without stopping except for a short talk with the Brocach, who was so widely known amongst a large circle of tourists. If they came in manageable numbers, they were housed with all due honour and decorum, in the big bedroom upstairs or in the "wee room" off the parlour, on which I had an option any time I wished to have it. If, however, they come in excessive numbers, then there was such a crowding and such a billeting problem, with the two bedrooms packed, prostrate forms in the "parlour," and oddments pushed out for the night to the peat shed or the hayloft or anything which gave prospect of a roof. To each he had the appropriate roughly humorous greeting. For one it was "Well, are ye a candidate for the tramp ward to-night?" and to another, "Indeed, indeed, whatna police force is after ye that ye are for hidin' so far from home?" and for another, "So the Glasgow municipality is tryin' to put ye on to the Dunraa poor's rate," and there would follow a laughing and a "daffing," and many thanks for

newspapers sent during the winter, or for the Christmas pound of tobacco and pound of tea. But was the new arrival a stranger, then there was such a standing upon one's Highland dignity, with a full parade of all the honours and manners imaginable, and a tentative exploring as to how far his angry snap would be appreciated, and final and speedy acceptance of the stranger, if deemed worthy, into the family.

Wherever the various guests were housed, in bedroom or parlour or peat shed, there were always two staple meeting-places for everybody—the bench at the end of the house, facing the west, or, on rainy or colder nights, the kitchen fireside. The open-air nights were wholly physical, devoted to Highland games and piping. There were racing, and hammer throwing, and putting the stone, and dancing by the Brocach's family to their father's piping, the Brocach easily beating at the heavy athletics such professional or business man as might be staying with him, but being sometimes held, and even beaten, by some young giant from Oxford or Cambridge. The Brocach had a profound respect for the Universities. "There was a young man up here from Oxford," he would begin

a story, "one, Colbert, they called him, against whom I putted the stone, and wad ye believe it, but the young gentleman . . . " and there would follow the story of how the young gentleman had beaten the Highland Brocach at his own Highland pastime. Such beatings from young outsiders, but not from other estate hands, found their way to rest amongst the Brocach's most profound memories, and earned his genuine respect. But always he had his revenge. "Ay, but can ye do this?" he would snap out after a defeat, and with that he would seize the trunk of a larch tree kept for the purpose and balance it and give a little run with it and toss it up and over, that "tossing the caber" which most people laugh at as being dull, but few can achieve. Or he would take his beloved pipes and run through the whole gamut of their repertory as he did to me the first time I stayed with him, and after the piping or the caber Oxford would duly admit itself beaten.

Round the fire, too, the Brocach's mastery was as undisputed as was his prowess in field athletics. These people whom chance threw in his way, business man, journalist, literary man, wandering student, all were keen to hear him on his own subject, Highland lore,

interest in which had brought them there, and the Brocach never sent anyone away disappointed who wished to hear him. In spacious floods of words he would talk and talk, his real knowledge admirably mixed with shrewd comment and caustic remark and grim humour and favourite joke, repeated for the millionth time since first it had leapt out in the course of conversation and been found good. Outside was the silence of mountain and wood, inside the deep glow of peat and the acrid smell that comes from it, and we there in an atmosphere of complete restfulness and kindliness, the children listening with awe and wonder to their father impressing "the strangers," the strangers themselves listening with unfeigned admiration to the father.

And always opposite him, and listening lovingly to the well-known talk, was the ever gracious Elspet, busy, as were her daughters, with knitting or sewing. Like so many other Highland things, there is something primitive and tribal about a woman's regard for her husband in Highland Scotland, and Elspet was too truly heir of her forebears not to have this primitive regard. But, though the Brocach's position in the

family was infinitely more than mere titular head of the house, Elspet treated him in accordance with his nickname of the Brocach, or the Boy, soothing him in his tantrums, interpreting with her understanding smile the angry snap in his voice when likely to terrify strangers, smoothing over social difficulties caused by his sharp humour, largely making her way seem his, and handling him with loving hands and admiring eyes when, on the Games Day, the whole family seemed to have to assist in adorning him with his complicated Highland dress so as not to shame the Laird and the pipes.

Then, usually in September, by which time the tourist traffic with the useful money it brought had nearly died, came the few tense weeks to which everything else, in a queer manner, had been but the preparation—the actual deer stalking. The Brocach's professional life was really packed into these few weeks annually. Day after day he was out on the hills with the Laird and such few friends as he still entertained, days of brilliant pale sunlight which made hills and rocks seem strangely contracted, days of lowering clouds and drifting mists low down on the hills, which were blurred and large, days of rain which

made stalking almost impossible. Perhaps these late autumn days are the finest Scotland can give, with the golden glory of fading bracken and larch, the sharp hard colouring of rock and water and dun heath, the sharp sky, the keen tang of the many-perfumed air, the clash of antler upon antler as stag fights stag, and, in the evening, as you tramp down a darkening glen, the strange unmusical "roaring" of the stags with which they serenade the hinds in this their love-making or "rutting" season. This "roaring" in the gathering twilight always seems to hint at a sterner Wild than Great Britain really possesses, and it was pleasant to get home and hear the Brocach, a great stalker, tell of the day's stalk and shooting of the seeming ferocious monsters, of the burns they had crossed and the detours they had made to approach the stag up wind, and the crouching on hands and knees, and the crawling over wet moss and dripping heather on serpentine belly, and the long waits, and at last the approach within range, to be rewarded by a clean shot behind the shoulder, or by seeing the stag, after several hours stalking, skip gaily over a ridge into safety, or reach the Sanctuary where no

man may shoot, or be protected by his silly hinds.

Then, the last stag shot, the guests all gone, and rain or snow and darkness the daily lot, the Brocach and his family reverted to their winter hibernation, which to unaccustomed people seemed almost maddening in its monotony. The Brocach assisted at shooting down the surplus hinds in the winter, but apart from that there was nothing to do but to read and reflect. There was no one now to whom he could be heroic but himself and his family, with whom he unendingly threshed out the manifold happenings of the summer and its tourists, and whom he proceeded again to mould in the way good servants of Dunraa should go.

CHAPTER IV

LADY JOAN AND YELLOW SPOT

For it was during these long winter nights, and their fitful intervals which are called days, that the Brocach had his family completely to himself to work upon them and mould them, in a sense scarcely understood in the cities.

It is a curious childhood, that passed in the glens. All through that long, long winter, the Fraser children had, as their only playmate, young Donald Beg, from across the water, but this friendship was always liable to sudden interruption owing to the theological disputes of the fathers. Otherwise, the only break in what seemed to unaccustomed people the stupefying monotony of the glen was the Sunday pilgrimage, when the Brocach took his family, though rarely the ailing Elspet, to church service in Dunraa village, ten miles distant, to hear Mass and to confession. What evil done in the glen, in thought, in speech, or in deed, they had to

confess, I never knew, but, militant Catholic though the Brocach was, I think he was always glad when the official part of the Sunday outing was over and he could wander about the village calling on the many ramifications of the family circle, and generally hearing what gossip and scandal were new since last he had descended in force from his fastness.

Who does not know these busily talkative groups of a village Sunday? "What was that ye were saying, John Robertson?" the Brocach would query—"the Free Church is putting stained glass windows into their bit building? Well, well, they'll no doubt be wanting to hide the great smallness of their congregation." Or, "And so John Sangster has passed away. And him not that long into his croft, and his wife with the two bairns, and the mortgage on the croft. Man! man! Yes, yes, consumption, it is a terrible thing, indeed. I mind his father telling me before he died that he thought young John wouldna be long after him, and he'd make a bonnier corpse of the two, him no being so wasted like." Or again, "They'll be telling me that Alec MacGregor's boy has got a grand bursary at Glasgow University. Alec has

aye kept his family on short rations so that he could send his boy to College, but wee Alec will do well by them all yet, indeed he will." Then, all the gossip having been heard, the Brocach would duly call on all whom death or birth or illness had visited, and, being a Scotsman, would gather all the harrowing details he could and be full of great-hearted condolence or congratulation, while his progeny mixed with their contemporaries and found human fellowship was good. Dinner would follow with one of the numerous relatives in the village, and then, in the short wintry afternoon, the family would be paraded again, and turn their backs upon the quiet houses and pass into the greater quietness of the Forest, the Brocach comfortably filled with internal grace and the week's gossip, to be retailed to Elspet, the children with memories of another foregathering with their kind. So much greater the amount of gossip to be gathered, and so much more enjoyable the meeting with other children, when, a not infrequent occurrence, snow-blocked roads had prevented their attending church for several weeks on end, during which time they had probably spoken to nobody but themselves.

Though his children revelled in the companionship of the staid village Sabbath, the Brocach, at bottom, was really glad to leave the village, where people buy and sell and work regular hours every day and live rather congestedly, and get back to the wilderness where he could spend days of uninterrupted idleness on his mental improvement. For, if winter was a lonely period, it was also a time of intensive mental cultivation. The Brocach was always an omnivorous reader, and people who had stayed in the glen in the summer months often sent him newspapers or books or magazines. These he devoured voraciously. He had travelled over a considerable part of Scotland during his shepherding days, and diligently read all the local news of the places he had been to, even if only passing through them, and could tell you how some unheard-of village was trying to get a Carnegie library installed, and at another one how the new provost was a well-known Oddfellow, and how, at a third one, foot-and-mouth disease had been reported. Sheep market reports were a joy to him, and prices of tups and wethers and black-faces, and the ups and downs of the great live-stock auctioneering firms. From

these local interests he would take flights into the bigger world, reading, with the same interest with which he read about sheep, the doings of such aristocrats and other society people as had shot in Dunraa Forest, and following the tangled European and home politics with a vast interest and a vast disbelief in all their mumbo-jumbo. And when contemporary history had been fully read and digested, back he would go to the classics, Stevenson, Scott, Burns, Miller, and St John's *Highland Sports.*

It was these long winter months, too, which showed him at his best as a family man. These lonely glens weld a family into a unity which we city-dwellers do not understand, and the little cottage in the Dubh Glen had a profoundly homely atmosphere. The Brocach was largely responsible for his family's education, compulsory school attendance coming largely to grief on the basic facts of time and space when children live many miles from the nearest school. The mathematical side of education was wholly neglected, the Brocach having rarely had to count aught but heads of sheep, and Elspet considering that if a person could count the change she got back when shopping

she could not go very far wrong. But immense pains were taken with literature. The Brocach would gather his fourfold family around him at nights and read to them, or make them read to him, turn about, with many a stop to explain the difficult words, and many a rough chaffing as one of his offspring stumbled over a difficult bit. Scottish history was read through and through, and English history where it impinges more directly on Scottish, "proud Edward," Henry VIII. and the Reformation, Elizabeth and her execution of Mary, Charles I. and Archbishop Laud, the Hanoverians and their struggles with the Jacobites, and William III. in whose reign was perpetrated the Massacre of Glencoe. The geography dealt with was almost wholly Scottish, and the Brocach's eyes would gleam and his voice leap out when geography dealt with some place he had been to, and the august narrative would be held up while he expounded to his wondering family some personal exploit or experience of his which had happened there. For years and years many parts of Scotland must have been associated by them, not with the facts the geography books coldly narrated, but as the scene of their much-travelled father's heroics.

Then, when the "book learning" was finished for the night, came the part in which I usually joined if I happened to be staying in the glen. Round the low open fireplace we would all sit while the Brocach expounded Highland lore to his family, it being his determination that they should grow up loyal, intelligent Highlanders, devoted to Dunraa, even as he had been. So he would tell of the great pipers, and clan warfare, and tales of the drovers' roads, and poachers, and queer things which had happened in a cave in Uist, and why a particular burn was called "The Thieves' Burn," and of famous stalks, and tell them of deer and grouse and salmon, and their ways of living and capture, and would show us his collection of old hunting weapons, and powder horns, and knives, and the family would sit listening to it all with bated breath, until one felt that they were indeed being moulded to their surroundings, as it was the Brocach's ambition they should be.

Next to his pipes, he loved to talk about deer, which he sometimes referred to as Cervidæ, or Ruminant Artiodactyle Mammals, with a fine parade of his book-learning, and he would tell the marvel of the stags' horns, how

they shed them at the end of the rutting or love season, to go hornless through the winter until they started producing them again in spring, each year seeing a new tine added, the whole spread of antlers being produced in about ten weeks, firm and strong after the "velvet" has been scraped off, a fresh wonder for the naturalist each year. He knew of the Wapiti Deer of North America, of how Fallow Deer are said to love music and to follow it, of Elk and Reindeer, and was properly impressed when I showed him Marco Polo's account of the hunting of Musk Deer in Central Asia, although somewhat sceptical when I told him the date of Marco's wanderings. He would speak of famous stalking exploits, of the great "imperial" stag, or fourteen-pointer, MacCallum Mor they called him, and of how he led a charmed life, and carried his great head of horn for three seasons before being stalked down ; of Rory, the last hound with whom they hunted deer ; and ever of the Laird, and how he "just couldna abide" driving deer, but insisted always upon stalking them. There was no end to stories about the Laird, who was shown as a sort of deity for whose exploits (and his piper's) Scotland had been provided

as a background, and whom they all had to revere and serve.

He was really a most excellent talker. His great enthusiasm, as a Catholic, was, of course, Mary, and John Knox he "just had no use for, at all, at all." Your Highlander is always a great gentleman, and the Brocach, to whom it was all very real, would quote how Knox described the miserable Queen as indulging in "howling and tears in greater abundance than the matter required," and would thereupon hunch up his shoulders, and, after a reference to Knox's behaviour to a woman in distress, say, "All the gentlemen were on the Queen's side"—a judgment from a standpoint which, no doubt, explains the impossible loyalties in which Scotland has indulged. Glencoe was ever a dread name to him, and he had mentally ranged Campbell of Glenlyon, who perpetrated the massacre of the Macdonalds there, somewhere alongside John Knox. The Brocach, with his sheep, had once crossed the Moor of Rannoch to the King's House Inn, and on the morrow had gone down Glencoe to Ballachulish, whence one crosses to Onich and outlandish places. The day he went down the glen, he told me,

was bright and clear, "and no' with that mist and rain on the hills which the name would seem to signify," and wild thoughts must have surged through the giant's mind as he trod that holy ground.

And ever and again throughout his talk, and making it real, would leap out that angry snap in his voice as he thought of something amusing.

"There was an English mannie here, stopped for a week with us," he said one night, "and he did maintain that the bagpipes were no' Highland after all, but were played in England, and he told me something about Shakespeare having spoken of the dronin' of a Lincolnshire bagpipe. Well, I just gave him a pitying look for his ignorance, and I picked up my pipes and I played to him as I did to you the first time ye were here, and at the end o' it I said to him, 'Na, can they do *that* in Lincolnshire wi' their bits of pipes?' and he shook his head sorrowful-like, and the next day he went away and never came back again. A Lincolnshire bagpipe, indeed, indeed!"

In these early days the imaginations of the children were held by the Forest even as was the Brocach's. Here were Ballantyne and

his Canadian trappers brought to their very door, played amidst the same surroundings but with the splendour of highly-coloured life added. The children revelled in their father's story-telling, knew all the names and personalities he did, and very properly looked upon Dunraa as being a centre where much fame could be acquired, instead of being at the end of a very long radius. In that storied atmosphere, surrounded by hunting implements and with the "roaring" of the stags to give a note of reality, they grew then as the Brocach wished them to, wrapped up in Dunraa and its tradition. Little wonder, when the Brocach could impress them so vividly. I can still see the little circle of eager faces as they leaned forward to hear their favourite story when the Brocach said to me one night :—

"Did I ever tell ye of Lady Joan and the stag they called Yellow Spot? Eh man, but I must be telling ye that.

"Ye see, the Laird's grandfather, poor gentleman, had come to the estate during his minority, and then, as soon as he could, had married the daughter of some English nobleman, Lady Joan she was called, of very great beauty and aye laughin' and

daffin' so that everybody liked her, and the Laird's grandfather was just clean daft about her. After the birth of an heir, the Laird's father, they went out to India together with the regiment in which the Laird's grandfather was then an Ensign and my grandfather was pipe sergeant-major, and the poor gentleman got wounded at some frontier battle and had to be taken out of action by my grandfather who happened to be standing near by—Old Macrimmon they called him because, like me, he was a grand piper. Well, the Laird's grandfather had been hit on the head, no' very dangerously, but there was aye something queer about him after that, and he was discharged from the service soon afterwards with the rank of Captain and came home with his lady, Lady Joan, and settled down at Dunraa, where Old Macrimmon soon joined him as chief piper, his time with the army being up.

"The Laird's father, him that was afterwards the General, was then about six years old, and very fond of a young deer calf he had found one day in a glen, a quiet beastie wi' a strange yellow spot on his off flank. Yellow Spot he was called, and he

was already gettin' big, with a useful bit horn on him, when the Captain and his lady came home. They were both terribly pleased to see their son again, and a'thing that was his became theirs as well, and Lady Joan grew to be terrible fond of Yellow Spot, who began to follow her about just as he did the future General. He was gettin' a fine big beast by this time, and Old Macrimmon told the Captain he would soon have to get rid of him, for ye canna tame the deer beyond a certain time, and a heavy young beast like Yellow Spot might turn dangerous. The Captain wadna hear of it, however, what with his son and Lady Joan bein' so fond of it, and Lady Joan bein' then big with another child and no' likin' to be crossed.

"Old Macrimmon was right, though. One afternoon, towards the end of a stalking season, Lady Joan and the future General went round to the paddock where Yellow Spot was kept and saw that he was different from his usual. He was rampaging round his paddock wi' little side springs, his ears cocked and eyes staring wild like, and when he saw Lady Joan and the General he backed away from them and

put his head down, and kept on wi' his side springs. Lady Joan saw something had changed in him and cried to the General to come back. He went forward laughin', however, and Yellow Spot kept on backing and springing. Lady Joan went after the General to draw him away, but her quick, nervous movements startled Yellow Spot, who butted her with those heavy young horns o' his and got her to the ground, she screaming and the General howling for help. Yellow Spot went fair mad and jumped upon Lady Joan, who was lying there, and butted her and ripped at her wi' those horns o' his, and only stopped when he saw the men of the house-party come rushin' to the paddock, when he jumped over the fence and made off for the hills.

"They picked up Lady Joan and carried her indoors, but they couldna help her. The butting and the nervous shock, she being as she was, proved too much for her, and she died that very night. She was buried down there behind the parish church, where so many of the Dunraa family lie, and people came from miles and miles around to see her buried, for her pleasant, laughin' ways had made everybody

like her, and there was many a head-shake and sigh for the Captain, the poor gentleman, who behaved very queerly during the funeral.

"Ye see, it had gone to his head. He never became what you might properly say mad, but whether that wound trouble in his head caused it, or whether it would have come anyway, he was never the same again. He had been terrible wrapped up in the poor lady, and when he looked at the stone that was put upon her grave, 'This will never do, Macrimmon,' he said to my grandfather, 'no, this will never do. Ye remember when the regiment lay at Agra and we saw the Taj Mahal? Well, Lady Joan must have a Taj Mahal too!' My grandfather agreed that she greatly deserved it, but that the expense would be enormous and more than the estate could allow. 'We'll save for it, Macrimmon,' said the Captain, 'we'll save for it, and when it is erected it will be free from debt as memorials should be.'

"Whether he ever got estimates of what his Taj Mahal would cost nobody can tell, but he set about savin' there and then. Never was such a savin' — worse nor

now while it lasted. His London house was shut down, and he never went to London again, and resigned from his clubs and other ploys there. Here on Dunraa he was terrible hard wi' crofters that got into arrear wi' their bits o' rents, him that had aye been so large in his ways; Old Macrimmon had to leave his house, which was let to somebody, and take up his quarters wi' his wife and family in the castle, where most of the servants were dismissed, and most of the rooms dismantled and closed. Old Macrimmon became butler and valet and Lord knows what a' to the Captain, and his wife was housekeeper. No' that there was much either to keep or to valet. The poor gentleman just let all his clothes wear out and crept about the castle in a Harris tweed suit that was a' patches and darning, and when he went to any public meeting it was in a kilt gettin' aye more and more wasted. And as for housekeeping, the Captain ate just scarcely anything at all, and was aye hard wi' my grandmother at the terrible accounts he said she ran up. And aye, o' nights, he sat at his bank accounts and lists o' shares, countin', countin', countin', and rubbing his

hands, and sometimes saying a kind o' sadly to Old Macrimmon, 'Macrimmon, we're getting on with the Taj Mahal. It will take a long time, but we're getting on.'

"But aye, as the shooting season came round again, he would dress up in his best clothes, and entertain as he and Lady Joan had done, and it was a grand sight, Old Macrimmon used to say, to see the Captain at the head of his table, acting like the great gentleman he was, and everything in the Castle cleaned up and put into use again and a full staff of servants, and Old Macrimmon piping the guests to dinner, and the Captain handing round his best whisky in the old decanters and leading the dance that usually followed. Ye see, he was just devoted to the memory of Lady Joan, and no doubt wished to carry on the way she had done during the season. But when it was all over and the guests all gone, down came everything in the Castle, the servants were a' dismissed, and in the whole big building were just the Captain wi' his bank books and lists o' shares, and Old Macrimmon and his wife.

"This had gone on for some years, and then Old Macrimmon began to notice that

the Captain was gettin' queerer in his behaviour, and aye white and drawn in the morning. 'She winna let me sleep,' he said to Old Macrimmon once; 'she comes to me at nights and asks when the Taj Mahal is to be ready, and looks terrible disappointed and then goes away.' 'Hoots, Captain, whatna way of speaking is that?' said Old Macrimmon; but aye the Captain kept on seeing Lady Joan at nights, and aye he was white and drawn in the mornings.

"Man, there's nothing so queer as folk. The Captain had a great love of Lady Joan, and because of it was saving for a Taj Mahal for her. But now he felt that she was a kind of reproaching him for his sacrifice not being big enough or quick enough, when he knew fine he was ruining his life, and his love turned into a mad hate. He had two ideas to occupy his heid. One, to keep on savin' and to do it more thoroughly, for reason of which up went every crofter's rent, and many a stalker was discharged and told he would be wanted only during the season, and then, if he couldna keep her from tormenting and reproaching him, to murder her.

"Yes, yes, he began to speak of murdering

her now. He said she was unworthy the great efforts he was making and an end had to come to it somehow. If she tormented him into an early grave then there would be no Taj Mahal. And one night, when his son, him that was later the General, but was then a young lad at Eton, had come home at Easter, Old Macrimmon was wakened by his wife who asked him what was that noise goin' on upstairs. Old Macrimmon listened and then got out o' bed and crept upstairs hearin' all the time the Captain crying in a wild voice, 'Wait ye, I'll get ye yet. Ye'll torment me, will ye, and jeer at me, will ye, and me doin' all I can to please your wild, extravagant pride. Aye, that was near it,' and aye there came a bang upon the wall of the dining-room where the Captain was. The door o' the dining-room was open, and when Old Macrimmon, who was in his night-shirt, looked in, man, for a' that he had seen and done in India, he confessed he stood there just rivetted wi' fear.

"Ye see, at the far end o' the room was the Captain seein' his Lady Joan again. In one hand he held a hunting knife with which, as he jumped about chasing the vision, he

stabbed and lunged, and his face was white and drawn, and when he wasna speaking to her he was sobbing and sobbing. In his other hand he held the wee lad who was afterwards the General and who was white as his father and whimperin' just terrible pathetic. Then, as my grandfather stood there unable to move, and they hadna noticed him, the Captain said to the General, 'Here, boy, ye take this knife and we'll corner her,' and wi' that he picked up another knife lyin' on the floor and put it into his son's hand, and the two o' them jumped about after Lady Joan stabbin' and stabbin' and stabbin', the boy whimperin' more and more. Then, in one of their jumps after the vision, for the Captain was still holding his boy by the hand, they half turned round and saw Old Macrimmon standing there in the black doorway in his white night-shirt. Wi' just a terrible wild shriek the Captain raised his knife and rushed at him.

"But Old Macrimmon—I mind him fine wi' that sodgerin' manner and voice o' his—wasna the man to give way. He closed with the Captain and held him by the wrist o' his knife-hand and the opposite shoulder and

said in a terrible voice, 'Whatna ploy is this ye are up to, Captain? Must I be telling a Dunraa to think shame o' himself, committing murder in thought and teaching his son to murder his mother?' and he forced the Captain into a chair near by. But he needna have exerted so much strength for the Captain was a' weak and limp and dropped into the chair and let his knife fall and buried his face in his hands and just sobbed as though he wad never end. My grandfather and grandmother, who had come up, saw that he was back to his normal again and put him to bed, and took the young boy, who was still crying, down to sleep beside them, for they couldna leave him alone in the empty room upstairs in the state he was in.

"Yes, yes, it was as I say, and as my father was told by Old Macrimmon, and ye can still see the marks o' that wild stabbin' to this day on the walls of the dining-room, but nobody knows what they mean but the Laird's family and mine. And after that, the Captain began to hate his son just as he now hated Lady Joan, and blamed him for having come atween the two of them, what wi' his pet deer and then his unwillingness

to help his father murder the lady that night. The family had to step in and see that the boy's education and what not was properly provided for, and he never came home again unless during the shooting season when the house was full and people could look after him, and when, anyway, the Captain lost all his queer ideas. Ye see, they couldna prove that the poor gentleman was mad and get the estate put under trustees, for no doctor would certify him mad, he being sane on everything but his Taj Mahal, and ye canna interfere wi' a man who wants to put up a shamelessly extravagant memorial to his wife but saves before he does it. And never had the Dunraa family had so much money as when the Captain was saving.

"But then, the boy being largely removed from his sight and spite, the Captain must needs cast about for something else to fix his mind on, and hit upon Yellow Spot. Ye see, he was still troubled wi' Lady Joan at nights, and now, being more and more worked up, began to wonder what she did with herself during the day. Meantime Yellow Spot had been busy in the Forest and his offspring were coming up,

and there were many o' them, and every time during the stalkin' when a stag wi' a yellow spot was brought down, or a hind when the keepers shot them down in the winter, the Captain was reminded o' the tragedy, and his visions got worse and worse and he began to see in every yellow spot shot a reproach for bein' so late wi' the Taj Mahal. And then he hit upon the idea, that during the day Lady Joan was really livin' with the yellow spots, incarnated in them I think it was called, and driving them to be shot so that they would remind him of the Taj Mahal, determined he should have no rest day or night. When Old Macrimmon saw what his trouble was he made the other keepers start in upon the yellow spots and slay them by fair means or foul, and the Captain offered a reward for every one that was killed, but a job like that takes time, and the Captain was too impatient to wait for it to be done as the keepers were doing it. So he decided to do it himself.

"Ye know the Sanctuary of the Forest, up there in the Ruidh Glen, the 'Red Glen' as ye might call it? The deer aye know that they are safe if they can get there when

being stalked or driven, as, until the Captain's day, nobody had ever shot there nor has anybody since, and the only people who go there are the keepers who spread out hay for the winter feed of the deer, going up by the only track that leads to it. Well, one November day, when the season was over and the guests all gone, and the Castle again dismantled, the Captain called Old Macrimmon to him and tells him to take a couple of rifles and plenty cartridges, and they would go out on the hill and see what shooting they could get. So off they set, and the Captain led all the day, but never listened to Old Macrimmon, who asked what they were to shoot, and when they were to begin, and spoke never a word until he said, 'The watcher of the Ruidh Glen will be down now for the season, Macrimmon?' to which Macrimmon said 'Ay,' at which the Captain looked pleased.

"Well, the November day wore on, and then Macrimmon says, 'Captain, whether ye want some shooting or no, we must be going home'; but the Captain said, 'Bide a wee, Macrimmon, we're no there yet,' at which Macrimmon says, 'What place may ye be makin' for?' and the Captain says,

'We're going to spend the night in the Ruidh Glen.' With that, Old Macrimmon lectures him upon his folly, and says it was the height of downright ridiculousness and that it would ruin the Forest if the Sanctuary were shot in, and that he was going home, and the Captain had better come too. But the Captain says with great dignity, 'Must I remind ye that I am Dunraa, Macrimmon?' and then adds, 'Ye will see me get rid of my trouble to-night, Macrimmon,' and with that leads in to the Ruidh Glen and up to a big boulder that rises on one of the flats where the good feeding is, and Macrimmon, for all he was scared, couldna leave him, him being Dunraa, and Macrimmon being a kind of hypnotised by this time.

"It was dark by the time they reached the boulder, with a heavy wet mist low down, but the moon was due later. They sat there with their plaids round them, and the Captain with a loaded rifle across his knees, and Old Macrimmon with the other ready loaded, as the Captain told him. As they sat there waitin' for the moon to come up, the Captain says in his usual sane conversational voice, 'Ye see, Macrimmon, I've given her the slip this time. She's left the

yellow spots now, to visit me in the Castle, but if I can shoot them all down before morning, when she comes back she will have nowhere to go and must die. We're doing a very clever piece of strategy this night, Macrimmon.' Then the moon came up, a wet, white-looking moon, but enough to show Macrimmon the Captain's face, terribly white and great drops o' perspiration running down it. Then suddenly he raised his rifle thinkin' he saw something, and fired the first shot that had been fired in the Sanctuary, and Macrimmon cries, 'Lord sakes, what are ye doin', Captain?' but the Captain says coolly, for all he was white and perspiring, 'Quiet, Macrimmon, dinna scare them off. Lady Joan's no' there, she's in the Castle,' so Macrimmon just lay there with his teeth chatterin', and crossing himself, for he was a pious man when scared.

All that night they lay there, the Captain shooting every time he saw a deer and every time he heard one, for the deer was scared that night, and they could hear their hoofs the whole night through. Then when the morning came, and they got off the boulder, both stiff and weak with cold and hunger and wet, they hunted about the glen and saw the

deer they had shot, and there was a fair number of them, and, as luck would have it, a big number of them were yellow spots. 'We've done a grand night's work, Macrimmon,' said the Captain. 'Lady Joan will now have nowhere to go. She leagued herself against me with her enemy and mine, but I've done for them all this time.' Old Macrimmon, just to humour him like, said, 'Ay, Captain, the yellow spots are killed. Lady Joan will trouble ye no more,' and with that they set off for home, the Captain, for all he was weak and hungry and cold, smiling to himself and talking in his ordinary manner. They got home about midday, more dead nor alive, but the Captain happier than he had been for many a year, and havin' made Macrimmon swear he would never speak of that night's work.

"Late that afternoon, Macrimmon and his wife were in the Captain's study makin' tea for him, him standin' by the window looking over the lawn and watching the last light go. Suddenly the Captain cried in a sharp voice, 'Macrimmon, Macrimmon,' and Macrimmon sees him stagger back from the window wi' one hand clutching at his breast and the other leanin' heavy

upon a table near by. Macrimmon hurried to the window, and there was a yellow spot deer half kneeling upon the lawn, wounded, ye see, probably in the Ruidh Glen that morning, and dying, and whether it was a homing instinct in the yellow spots that brought it there to die, or just accident, it wasna for Macrimmon to say, nor for me. But even while Macrimmon got to the window and had barely time to see the deer, the Captain said in a queer voice, 'There's no escape, none,' and, when Macrimmon looked round at his wife's cry, there was the poor gentleman fallen over the table, and then his knees gave way and he sank down, hitting his jaw cruel upon the edge of the table, until he fell on his side dead.

"His death was certified as heart failure, and when Old Macrimmon examined the dead deer he found its off fore-leg was broken by a shot, and there was another shot in its throat, no doubt both from the Captain's wild shooting, who was never likely to wound, but always to kill, in a good light. He left a powerful sum of money, the Captain, but it's a queer thing that his young wife's death should have made him a miser, and the Laird's young wife's death should have made him so

extravagant. But they were aye a very interesting family, the Dunraas, good when they were sane, and grand when they were mad. It shows ye, though, that ill-gotten money doesna bide. And it's a very remarkable fact that the yellow spots didna last many seasons after the Captain's death, but soon died or were bred out."

So were the Dunraa family and the Dunraa Forest invested with a halo in the childish imaginations, the children sitting with wide-open solemn eyes, while their redoubtable father thus held them or passing guest with his stories. Simon Beg and Jean usually sat very quietly during these long talks round the fire, and were very patient and industrious at their books, for they were wholly of Elspet; Evan was more inquisitive and showed a liking for adventure books and his father's tales of Scottish travel; little Nellie, quick and nimble-minded, showed no talent at all for application, and had difficulty in concentrating for ten consecutive minutes on even a new book, but liked to listen to conversation, and to take part in it at times with childish interruptions which usually brought down upon her an admonishing

"Ye mustna be forward, Nellie," from father or mother, to which she showed a somewhat sulky obedience. She was high-spirited and lively even then, little Nellie, and was plainly pre-destined to be a feminine roystering Brocach, which her father realised, and, because of it, he had long since made her his favourite. In those early days it certainly seemed as though the Brocach were preparing future servants for Dunraa under conditions which allowed of neither corner nor crevice on which disintegrating forces could get a hold.

Very homely and very compact was the Fraser family in those first years of my acquaintanceship with it. As Simon Beg, the eldest, grew up, he was employed on the Forest as a general help and ghillie until such time as he was fit for any stalker's post that grew vacant. The others were too young for considerations of jobs and other intrusive things to affect them yet, and I was too interested in the glory of the Forest to care much for the general conditions prevailing upon it or to think of the fate that was even then striding across the hills.

CHAPTER V

AFTER SIX YEARS

TIME and its processes are of slow development in the glens. I had been coming and going to the Dubh Glen, at odd intervals, for five or six years, at each visit struck by the seeming unity of purpose and aim of the Fraser family, and at each visit still thinking of the people as fixed and unchanging as the hills amongst which they dwelt. Then I discovered abruptly that the Fraser family was growing up and facing questions.

It was first brought to my notice when I found the Brocach somewhat silent and downcast on the evening of an unexpected arrival I had made on a hot July afternoon.

"It's about Simon Beg," said Elspet, to whom I had commented on the Brocach's unwonted dejection, and who henceforth was to act as a sort of Greek chorus to me, explaining to me the differences in the family from which, as a stranger, I was

excluded, which led up to the various events of which, as a friend, I was fully informed. "Ye see, Simon Beg 'll awa' from the Forest."

This was a startling intrusion on my feeling of unchangeability in the Dubh Glen. What, had these long winter nights and the solitude of his upbringing failed to develop a sacrificial spirit in the Brocach's eldest? Was he dreaming of other things than service to Dunraa, where his father had been so happy and achieved much fame? Jean, the elder daughter, now some eighteen years of age, had been away from time to time, it is true, but only to give a helping hand at Dunraa Castle, or at the Dunraa Arms Hotel during the season, then to return to the Dubh Glen as chief help to the ailing Elspet. With Simon Beg it was different. He was now about twenty years of age I reflected, no great change in itself, and employed as a general hand on the estate, helping feed the deer with hay when the winter cold and food scarcity drove them down from the heights, acting as a ghillie during the season and generally doing odd jobs. He had learned no trade, but was on the Forest, employed by it and living from it, as his father intended, and

there had been no change but in his stature. Now he was wanting to get away from it.

"The glens are no' what they were," resumed Elspet, "nor the young folk so ready to bide in them as once they were. In my young day we were born here and we just bided here, and no one thought of leavin' unless they had to. The wilder lads, mebbe, became sodgers, and the girls went to service in Glasgow or London, but we liked the glens and came back to them. But it's different nowadays. We now get the post twice a week when the roads permit of it, and there's a greater feeling of contact with the outside world, I'll be thinkin', and a feeling of excitement and a wish to be awa' and in amongst it a'. And it's easier to get down to Glasgow nor it was, what with more trains and a motor-bus to take us to them from Dunraa village, and more people comin' up here wi' their talk of the cities and their goings-on. And there's a' this talk about emigration and Canada and Australia as though nobody could get far enough awa' from home. No, the young folk are no' so content to bide as they were, and the glens are greatly changed."

"And what about the Brocach's wish to see them all on the Forest?" I queried.

"Ay, gin there is a Forest left for them to be on," she replied with a shake of her head. "We shall just have to wait and see what the years bring wi' them. But Simon Beg, I'm thinkin', will no' be held back, he's that set upon joining the Partick police. I'm thinking it would have been better had the Brocach taken my advice and let Simon Beg learn a trade. Murray, the builder in the village there, said he wad take Simon Beg as an apprentice, but the Brocach just wouldna hear of any of his family learning a trade, and was that angry and upset about it."

"What, have you doubts about the Forest itself? Are things going so badly with the Laird?"

"I'm thinkin' the Brocach himself will have something to say to you about that if he tells you about Simon Beg," she countered evasively, not wishing to impinge upon her husband's conversational territory, nor, perhaps, knowing how far the Brocach wished to reveal the straitened circumstances of the beloved Laird.

But the Brocach revealed to me his

deepest fears during a joint fishing expedition on the morrow to the Lochan Uaine, or Green Loch, lying far up a hillside. As we tramped steadily up a rough glen, a necessary preliminary to anything projected in the Highlands, the Brocach showed, by his conversational casting-about for a proper means of broaching the subject, that something was lying heavily on his mind which he wished to unburden.

"Elspet will mebbe have told you?" he asked at last.

"What, about Simon Beg wanting to leave the Forest?"

"Ay, Simon Beg 'll be wantin' awa' from the Forest. He's just gone clean mad about joining the Partick police, where my cousin, Hamish Fraser, him whose father had the bothy in the Geusachan, is a sergeant, and nothing will hold him back at all, at all. No doubt Hamish, being a sergeant, will be able to see to it that Simon Beg gets quick promotion, but I'm feared, man, I've got terribly feared lately."

"Feared, Brocach? Afraid of what?"

We turned from the glen up a break in the hills, a little corrie down which foamed a burn coming from the Lochan Uaine,

and the Brocach said not a word at first in answer to my question. Then—

"Ye see," he went on, "the Laird is no' what he was, and the Forest of Dunraa will likewise no' be what it was."

The track got ever so much steeper now, and conversation stopped until we got to the loch and put out in our boat. Then, as we pulled about the loch trolling for the big lake trout, *Salmo ferox*, that lie there, the Brocach unburdened himself to me. And never a snap was in his voice all that day.

"Ye see," he began, "it all comes of the terrible extravagance and bettin' and wagerin' o' the Laird in his young days. Mind ye, the rates and the taxes have had a lot to do with it, but the mortgages which the Laird found on the estate when he took it over from his father, the General, and the others he has added to them, have just crushed all the life out of the Forest, indeed they have, and there's like to be no employment here for either man or beast.

"Ye see, he was extravagant by nature, as one might say, and then, when her leddyship died in childbirth barely a year after they had been married, something

got into the Laird's head and he acted more like one that has no control of his senses nor one with a very fine heart and as good a head to keep it from going astray. He said then that he would never marry again, nor did he, but having no heir a kind of weighed upon him, and what between that and the loss of his wife, who was a very handsome woman and with fine taking ways about her, he just a sort of let things go and never stopped to think that what he was spending so blithely could never be recovered out of the stones and heather of Dunraa. And no doubt the fear of becoming queer after losing his young wife, and getting miserly in his habits as his grandfather had done, made him more extravagant, just as it did his father, the General, who spent everything that the Captain had saved.

"I had always a kind of privileged position with the Laird, and after a very great shooting season, when he'd entertained on a greater scale than ever, and betted more than ever on who would get the biggest stag, and who the first "royal," and whether Monday or Tuesday would give the best stalking, and whether Wednesday wouldna

beat the two of them, I said to him, 'Laird,' I says, 'there's always a day of reckoning,' but he wouldna listen, but just laughed that daffin' laugh o' his and went his ways like the wilful man he has always been.

"They were great days for the stalkers and ghillies, these, with great house-parties, and all the guests with more money nor they seemed to know what to do with, and very open-handed and generous, and at the end of the season every Dunraa keeper with a good deal more money in his pocket nor he had had at the beginning. Ay, he was aye a good master, the Laird, and let us all share in the wild time he had. Just draw in that line a bittie, or the trout can spit it out again when they feel the hook.

"But the day of reckoning came, and it's been a long one and a hard one, and like to be still harder. He was a proud man, the Laird, ye see, and liked to keep up his Highland hospitality when in London, in that great house o' his in one of these big squares; and in India, when he was out with his regiment, that he was later Colonel of, he spent great sums of money on his hunting expeditions, and never would he hear of letting his shootings when he was abroad.

'Dunraa has never been let, and never will be,' he would say wi' that proud voice o' his, and neither his law agents, them that's in Edinburgh, nor me, could ever persuade him otherwise.

"But aye there was greater difficulty in meeting the interest on the mortgages, and then there came a time when he couldna meet it, and could raise no more money on the estate. I'm no very skilled at business and the ways o' these lawyers, but I've heard tell that, though the Laird was never made publicly bankrupt, he signed a Trust Deed, and that his creditors—and there was a big heap of them—formed a committee, and that the estate is now managed in their interests, the rents from the bits of farms and crofts and the houses in the village and all the feu-duties going to the creditors, and the Laird being allowed a fixed sum yearly in addition to keeping Dunraa Castle and the Dubh Glen beat in his own hands after all the other beats have been let. There's just no' a penny comes from the estate which the Laird can call his own, except by leave of these creditors o' his, and him that was so proud and extravagant and wilful." The Brocach stopped here and relit his pipe

and pulled viciously at it, while I busied myself with a little fellow who had committed suicide in the depths below by taking my spinning minnow.

"And what are you afraid of, Brocach?" I asked, when the lake had resumed the placidity that follows these death struggles of its denizens. He pulled about the lake a bit and resumed—

"Ye see, there's just no money being spent on the estate at all, and I'm feared that Simon Beg, and Evan, and Jean, and wee Nellie, will no' be able to bide here. Man and boy I've been with Dunraa, and my father before me, and his father before him. Dunraa has never been without a Fraser, and there have been few Frasers who wished themselves awa' from it, and none who went who was the happier for it. But now the trustees are more and more grasping as the rates and taxes rise, and when a wee croft gets into disrepair it's likely to bide in disrepair, and there are no' so many watchers in the glens as there were, and no' so many keepers, and no' so many ghillies, and no' so many labourers, for the trustees are makin' a very little labour go a very long way. And the shooting tenants, them that has

the beats other than the Dubh Glen, they willna want to spend money on a place that doesna belong to them, and the young men are wonderin' what they are going to do when they grow up. Dunraa looks as though it has had its day, a good one and a long one, but it's by, I'm thinkin', it's by."

"The Laird is getting to be an oldish man, Brocach. Suppose his heir puts matters right? Who is the heir?"

"Well, there is no direct heir, him bein' a widower and childless, and there's likely to be no heir at all. Ye see, the estate was held on entail so that the sitting proprietor could never sell it, but the Laird havin' no direct heir, and the creditors bein' many and powerful, an action was taken in the Court of Session, it that sits in Edinburgh, and the entail was broken, and the estate can now be sold at any time. Prices are risin' for Highland properties, and the Laird and the creditors may sell when they can cover their claims wi' a good balance left over for the Laird to live on. No' that it may make so very much difference even if a wealthy proprietor does take it over. He is no' likely to grumble at finding a small wages bill and the Forest kept up at a good level

with fewer keepers and labourers, and will no' be likely to keep work for men because of any interest in them, he being a stranger and not used to these parts. The young lads know all this in a kind of way, and are gettin' very restive, and I'm terribly feared that some day there will be neither Laird nor Frasers in Dunraa."

Trouble lay deep on the Brocach's face as he pulled me about the loch that afternoon, while the sun crept round westwards and the western fall of rock above Lochan Uaine stood out clearly in every ridge and pinnacle and corrie, and the sky was serene and flushed, and all things full of silence and repose. Once again that old lie seemed true, that man is born to sorrow, the only thing that disturbs the contented peace of matter. I had known, of course, that the Laird was hard-up, but that state is as common as heather in the Highlands, and that the Fraser family was likely to be deeply affected I had not until now dreamed of.

"Suppose the Laird sells, Brocach? What then?"

"Dunraa without the Laird will just no' be Dunraa at all, at all. But the Fraser family will bide on here just the same. A

man likes the bit ground he's known all his life. There's aye been a Fraser in Dunraa's service and there aye will be." And then, later, when he seemed to think that his territorial attachment to his native Forest might hint at a diminishing personal loyalty to the historic owners of Dunraa—

"Mind ye, it's no' that I'm thinkin' the Laird will sell. He's a proud man the Laird, and he'll no' wish to have it said when he's dead and gone that the last o' his line sold out. Na, na, the Laird will no' have that said of him. He's puttin' up a grand fight and he'll win through. But I'm just wonderin' at times if I can hold Simon Beg and Evan and wee Nellie until the Laird has won through. Simon Beg will probably go to Partick, he being that set upon it, and Jean will no doubt go to service in London, as her mother did afore her, when wee Nellie can take her place. But Evan and Nellie must bide in the Forest; yes, yes, they must bide."

When we had tied up the boat again and were tramping down the glen homewards—

"They're a good family," said the Brocach, with reference to his offspring, "and have given us no trouble, Elspet nor me. Good

on the hill and good in the house, each in his own department, and aye willin' and aye helpful. Simon Beg has filled out well, as ye'll have noticed, and has done fine wi' his dancing at the Games these last two years. And a grand head for deer and their ways. The Laird likes him as a ghillie. Man, it's just terrible disappointin' that he's got this Partick notion into his head. He'll never be happier nor he's been here, and I just winna know what to say to the Laird when I must tell him that one of my family has gone."

I had known the Brocach's pride and delight in all things pertaining to his native Dunraa and the depth of family piety that lay beneath his rollicking spirits and spacious heroics, but not till now had I guessed at the degree of personal attachment he felt towards the beloved Laird. Was the Brocach to indulge in one of these impossible Scottish loyalties? Was he to sacrifice his family to an impecunious laird and an impecunious Forest? Financial miracles do not happen overnight on Highland properties, and a Forest managed by creditors, or newly bought by some wealthy person who took an interest in it only for

a few weeks each year, was obviously not a place which could attract young people. But the Brocach was devoted to it, had looked forward to his family remaining on it and becoming great, and, in the event of his family showing no desire to stay, Scotch stubbornness would come to back up his loyalty, and for each succeeding member who wished to drop out, the drop would be more difficult and would rouse more opposition.

Simon Beg, I felt, would almost certainly go; Jean, with her quiet, helpful ways, was an almost inevitable departure as soon as Nellie could take her place, although the Brocach would do everything in his power to get her to accept service in one of the bigger houses in or near Dunraa village. But Evan and Nellie? Like the Brocach, I wondered whether they would stay, when I considered them in the light of his new revelation, and, unlike him, I wondered whether he ought to try to force them. Evan was growing as Simon Beg had grown, tall and well filled out, and had already done good work in the boys' competitions at the Games. He took after his father rather than his mother, with his callow love of

joking, his quick repartee among his Forest friends (when he saw them), and his liking for the weekly march to the village for Mass and gossip. The brown-eyed Nellie, for all she was only some fourteen, was wilful and bubbling over with high spirits and fun. More and more, as she developed like him, she became the Brocach's favourite, who loved her wilfulness and high-spiritedness, loved to tease her and be teased by her, and loved to see himself mirrored in her. She and Evan were great friends, and many a scampering on the hills they had together, and many a doughty campaign with me when bent upon tracking some Alpine species to its lair. Only one thing sometimes marred the Brocach's enjoyment of his two youngest. High spirits and a sense of fun do not find much of an outlet in a lonely glen, and Evan and Nellie were in the habit of searching out Donald Beg, Lamont's boy across the water, and getting up some joint romp with him. When God had come between the two fathers, these consortings were broken off temporarily, but the two theologians never viewed the intimacy with favour. Fortunately, Donald Beg had a bicycle and could often get down

to the village, otherwise he must have died of childish loneliness. Could Evan and Nellie, with their high spirits, be contained within an impecunious glen? How many staid, serious Highlanders began by being merry and bright as were Evan and Nellie, but were gradually repressed by the all-crushing weight of solemn mountains and woods?

As a matter of fact, Simon Beg left at the end of the season and was duly admitted to the Partick Police, where the heavy athletes come from. Jean wrote me about his departure, and how the whole family had gone down to the village to see him off on the motor-bus which took him to the station, whence he was to proceed to Glasgow, where he stayed with his father's cousin, the sergeant, who was to look after his promotion. They had had a photograph of him in his uniform and liked it. And no doubt Simon Beg found walking the Partick streets dull and dreary at first, and running in Glasgow "drunks" different work from work in the Forest, but took to it as his kind have always done. And, equally undoubtedly, he would always be ready to stop on his beat when he heard the soft Highland

accent being spoken, to have a talk with its owner about the Ben or the Glen he came from and the deeds that are done there. And certainly he changed a Highland cottage for a Glasgow tenement dwelling, whose common entrance he learned to call by that hideous Glasgow term, a "close," and the sweet Highland air for Glasgow's smuts and fogs. He gradually adopted Glasgow's sing-song accent and its malpractices on the Scottish dialect, and married a Glasgow girl no better than any of her kind, and his children, as they grew up, had, as a playground, the streets and the municipal parks, the latter with many restrictions. However, he was able to visit Glasgow's tea-rooms on special occasions, and began to know the different Clyde pleasure steamers by their funnels, the proper football team to support, the thrill of Glasgow Argyle Street on a Saturday night, and other Glasgow amusements, and no doubt felt he was more in contact with the world than he had been in Dunraa.

His going made little apparent difference in the Dubh Glen. Life there seemed to roll on as usual despite the vacant place, although perhaps the Brocach exerted him-

self a little more to impress upon the remaining three the excellence of all things pertaining to life in the Forest of Dunraa. Jean had developed a character of her own by this time, but was too obviously bound to the Forest by the necessity of her mother having a helping hand to cause danger of a further break, while the other two were still young and undeveloped. Family questions were in abeyance so far as they were concerned, and in my comings and goings I was still more concerned with personalities and oddities of the Forest, its charm and its humours, than with any impending lowering of clouds upon the Brocach's older age. It was thus of paramount importance to be told that "Tarry" Smith, who tarred the roofs of the watchers' bothies, and whatever else on a Forest might require tarring, had been so scared at sleeping alone amidst the vast silence of the bothy far up the Snow Corrie that he had taken to speaking to himself, and had then come down to the fat lowlands, where men and women live, and had refused to finish his tarring until someone was sent up to keep him company. When, in later years, "Tarry" married, the Forest folk

had a standard joke, liking to say to him, "Well, Tarry, do ye still speak to yourself, or do ye find Mrs Smith keeps ye company?" There was that sad day for us all when old Dr M'Lellan died, he whose gig and pony were known for miles around Dunraa village, and on every road leading up to a glen where death or birth or congested lungs from excessive perspiring while stalking had called upon him for service, and whom no storm had ever held back. A good man was the Doctor, who never left his post except for a few days towards Christmas when he was wont to go to Glasgow and take part in the annual reunion and dinner of his year at the University, when it was usually said that the remnants of the student spirit which were still in him but dammed back in Dunraa found their annual vent and he performed prodigies of reunion high spirits. Doubtless old M'Lellan felt the loneliness of life descend upon him when, the last time he went to one of these reunions, a friend asked him where his class was, and he had to answer, "Man, I'm the class," his contemporaries all having died out. The new doctor turned out to be a young fellow desperately keen on fishing and

geology, and there was anxious speculation amongst the natives as to who would be the first victims to have to call upon the new man's skill, and hopes that the first troubles would be light ones so that he could gradually work his way up to the serious cases. The comings and goings of the Protestant clergy left Catholic Dunraa with a feeling of mere sardonic interest in the "calls" to which Presbyterians are subject, and a feeling that the eternity of their own Church was witnessed to by the permanence of Father Grant, who had grown old amongst them. And when Hector Macpherson, Dunraa's pride in the Games running competitions, had been badly beaten by one of the Duneir men, he was usually asked, when seen hurrying, "What's your hurry, Hector? There will no' be a Duneir man gettin' there ahead of ye the day." And throughout all the length and breadth of the Forest a spirit of kindly, unobtrusive solicitude and helpfulness for all such as might be in trouble, to be covered later by a sharp but kindly humour.

There were days, too, of lazy dalliance in the glens, of epics on the heights—days of blinding, sudden mist, when the Brocach

would let his "camich," or long mountain crook, fall as a guide in the direction we were making towards, and grunt, "We will just be biding here until the mist has lifted," for precipices were near down which we might topple if we ventured forward in the mist, down those deep gullies whose noisy waters sent up to us a muffled sound of rage; days of cloudless sunshine, when Scotland rolled away before and beneath us in all her incomparably blue distances, and of deep blue loch and dun heath and tawny rocks and golden sands, whose very silence fell upon the ear as a rich and solemn strain; and days of snow and sunshine, when black rock protruded through sparkling snow, and the burns were stilled or muffled, and mist would drift lazily about, and the snowy glitter was a strain to the eye, as the ensuing cream colour was soft, and the hills at evening would flush a glorious rose in the sunset and float above the dark, encircling woods.

CHAPTER VI

STALKING

But, though profound peace lay upon the Dubh Glen and the Forest of Dunraa, Simon Beg's departure and the Brocach's revelation of his fears threw, for me, a new light upon it. It seemed to be but a twilight peace, a Roman peace, in which things suffer a slow and dignified decay, and there is no inner spirit of renewal. I could feel that the Brocach, in his later years, was to be hit badly, and I wondered how heavy the blow was to be.

The Laird's poverty lay upon the Forest like the touch of a dead hand. His creditors were hard taskmasters, gathering oft-times where they had not strawed, and showing little regard for those who were dependent upon the Forest. It was business management in place of master and retainers, nor did the shooting tenants, who took the beats other than the Dubh Glen, care to spend money on the place beyond what was neces-

sary for the social aims they had in view. Their supplies came from the great London stores; they had neither the duty nor the interest to spend money on the estate, and beyond their keenness on the stalking, the social function of the Games, and their entertaining, had no interest whatsoever in what lay around them. The old days on which the Brocach loved to dwell, when the Laird, "and his father afore him," had entertained royally, and there was a stir and life in the Forest, when there was less deer driving and more intense stalking requiring more stalkers and ghillies, were completely dead, and had given place to the more aloof shooting parties of the tenants, with a shorter season, and less personal intimacy than when the same guests returned year after year. Such movement as now took place amongst the personnel of the Forest consisted of the young men leaving for the cities or going abroad, or of the death of some crofter, whose croft, as likely as not, was allowed to return to heather, for the more intense preservation of deer with the resulting higher rents. Amongst the stalkers themselves, a hardy race whose mortality rate is very low and whose physical ability for their work lasts till an advanced

age, there had been no movement whatsoever for many years, nor was there sign of any. The men who had been young stalkers when the Brocach was young, were there still, and were likely to be for many years.

In this setting of peace and permanence the Brocach waxed more and more reminiscent. He was beginning to age, too. Though he still led the Dunraa Pipers at the head of the clan on to the ground on the Games Day, he no longer appeared as a competitor at that great function. He had even given up standing in passive dignity while the judges walked around him, and sometimes even touched him, to determine that he was undoubtedly the best dressed Highlander on the ground. Rather, he stood looking on, ripe in experience and victory and judgment, full of sound criticism and advice; and refraining from scathing criticism of some of the decisions with which he disagreed, only because of the high respect in which he held the territorial titles of the judges. He was less spacious in his heroics now, more mellow, and it was good to see the fine courtesy of these same Territorial Titles and the Brocach as they addressed each other, all alike conscious of an almost

lifelong acquaintanceship, they confident of themselves, he with real deference and vast pride in himself.

In that serene period of slow and dignified ageing, disturbed, so far, only by the disappeared ripple of Simon Beg's departure, the Brocach, I think deliberately, turned a blind eye to the decay going on around him. The citizens of the Roman Empire thought it would last for ever, so profound was its peace, so impossible was it to conceive of its decay or replacement. So the Brocach in this mellowing twilight held more firmly than ever to the Forest of Dunraa, with that more intense, cruel love which comes to those who crush down a doubt which will arise, and, encouraged by his growing reminiscent habit, began to think of the decaying Forest being as fair as it had been in its heyday when he was young, a place to which his family should and must attach themselves. More than ever did he like to talk to the Laird, hanging on to his conversation and his presence with that desperate clinging of one clinging to one's last hope. If the Laird "won through" his family might be retained for Dunraa: the Brocach seemed to regard life now as a race between the happening of

a financial miracle and his power to hold his children by him.

"The Brocach winna see things," said Elspet, that faithful interpreter of the family, to me. "He winna see that Dunraa has had its day, and that there is no future here for the young men. Whiles I get feared when I think of Evan and Nellie, they're both getting that restless, and it will soon be time for Evan to get a trade if he isna to bide on the Forest. And the Brocach just willna hear of it, and says things are coming round fine and that Evan needna fear."

The Brocach was, indeed, shutting his eyes to a great many things. Evan and Nellie were both growing apace, and the more they grew the less became the Brocach's power to hold them. However storied the Brocach might endeavour to make the twilight of Dunraa's decay, it failed to impress his family as it had done formerly. The spirit of revolt was obviously spreading. Jean, for all her quiet ways, was clearly waiting impatiently till such time as Nellie was old enough to take her place as housekeeper, when she could go off to domestic service down south. Evan, growing quickly and full

of life and spirits, like an untamed Brocach, was greatly excited every time he heard of some one else having gone off to Canada, or joined some southern police force, or the army. "What will they be doin' in Canada?" the Brocach would ask scornfully when Evan talked with enthusiasm of those who had gone; "will they find a better master there than the Laird, or a finer place than Dunraa?" which was convincing to him but apparently left Evan quite cold.

At the end of his finest stories, too, Nellie would usually say, "These things dinna happen nowadays in the Forest," a statement which showed her growing sense of emptiness in Dunraa and usually brought down the vials of the Brocach's indignation upon her head, for all she was his favourite, and a very great one. "Will ye be wantin' great events to happen every day?" he would snort. "Wait ye till the Laird has won through and ye'll no' find a more interesting family nor a more interesting place than Dunraa." But Nellie continued to think otherwise, and it was clear that, in her, the Brocach was to have his biggest disappointment. During these three or four years which had elapsed since Simon Beg's departure she had grown tall

and lithe, full of fun, and was already famous in the whole district for her loveliness. Everybody liked her, as she, too, liked everybody, and her successes at Village Dance or Ghillies' Ball, and the obvious liking for her shown by all the visitors who came up to the Dubh Glen, showed her that she could have successes in a bigger world than that of Dunraa.

The family tie still held, and the family love, but desire for a bigger life had grown strong, and the Brocach began to see he would have to fight if he was to sacrifice his family to Dunraa. More and more did he overwhelm Evan with scorn when he spoke of further emigrants ; more and more did he repress his beloved Nellie, for whom he was putting up a special fight. Ever greater obstacles were put in the way of their going to the village ; more and more the ordering of supplies from the village devolved upon Jean, who was not allowed to use Nellie so often as message girl on that ten-mile stretch ; more and more, as Nellie was taken up by visitors, came the admonishing voice of her father, "Nellie, ye mustna be so forward." And once, when Dr and Mrs MacLean from Perth, who had spent their annual fortnight with the Frasers, asked if

they might take Nellie to stay with them for a week in Perth, and Nellie was all agog with excitement at the prospect of getting to a big city, the Brocach intervened with a heavy refusal, determined she should not get her head further turned by the gaieties of that fair town, and it took Nellie a long time to get over her soreness. The Brocach had told me that day on the loch when he unfolded himself on the subject of Simon Beg's departure, that the Laird was putting up a grand fight and would win through. He was keeping his two favourite younger children with a jealous love which feared all outside influences, convinced that they could never be happier than on his beloved Dunraa, whose inevitable recovery, as he considered it, would be bright and happy enough to satisfy them.

So, gradually, a spirit of sullen hostility settled on that little household, complicated by the great family tie which these years of solitary living together had bound round them, and which required so much breaking. Evan was greatly disappointed at not being allowed to go to the village to be apprenticed to a trade. There had apparently been quite a stiff family debate on the matter, the Brocach finally having to rise in all his great

wrath and authority to kill the proposal definitely. He was now doing general work on the estate, as Simon Beg had done. Nellie still smarted under the repression she had endured regarding the Perth visit and all of which that was but one example. There was no outlet for her; but Evan found some relief in joining the village company of the Highland Territorial regiment which recruited there and enjoyed himself mightily in the drill and the annual training camp and the fellowship of it all. Of course, the glen seemed lonelier and less promising each time he returned from a camp.

Yes, the Brocach and his family were now definitely on opposite sides, looking at each other with a numbed and pained misunderstanding. I gradually recognised that I was watching the end of a great tradition, and that the forces which had made the Brocach and his social relationship towards the Laird and the Laird's guests could no longer work on his family. When Simon Beg came home from Glasgow he listened to his father's talk with an amused tolerance. In Glasgow he was becoming political, was learning ideas about democratic freedom, and, for all his filial piety, he left no doubt that he regarded

his father as an anachronism both in his work and in his outlook. This spirit of social revolt was really at work upon the other members of the family, making it impossible for them to accept what their father had accepted. They questioned the position and claims of the "gentry." How could the youthful Evan know, how could Simon Beg learn in Glasgow, the sense of personal worth overleaping social differences which made the old Scottish master and retainer relationship one of real equality, and made meaningless any idea of class warfare? For good or for evil, democratic freedom was claiming them, and I was in at the death of a tradition healthier than the proletarian one.

"Ye shouldna speak like that, Simon Beg," Elspet admonished him one day when he was scoffing at the deer forests and stalkers; "your father doesna like it when he hears ye and ye're just filling Evan's head wi' a lot of nonsense." Evan liked, however, to have his head filled "wi' a lot of nonsense"; it fell in with his mood of eager revolt and discontent. For Evan was becoming very political under the influence of the village radicals, with whom he more and more consorted, and as a result of the talks he heard

amongst the Territorial troops. There was none of the narrow moroseness of Highland radicalism about him, simply the fever of his age, and the same enthusiasm which had made his father embrace the "gentry" turned in another direction as a result of his defeat over the question of learning a trade, and a wish to be in opposition to his father. He liked to speak with the crofters, always sore against the "oppression" of a deer forest, and to hear their grumblings, and to quote them to his father and stoutly defend them, whilst the Brocach, scenting danger, failed to see the mere mischievous element in Evan's radicalism, and waxed fierce and drove Evan more and more into a settled opposition.

Even the sad debacle of Sir William Carslake (late Indian Civil Service), one of the Brocach's last joyful experiences, merely stirred up class warfare in the family. Many stories of Sir William's habit of getting pleasantly drunk on occasion were current throughout the Forest, where he had been a frequent guest of the Laird and was a fairly good shot. "Let's hope he winna get drunk on the hill," Nellie said when she heard that her father was to stalk for him on the day in question; and, "Hoots, lassie, whatna way of

speaking of Sir William is that?" the Brocach had answered somewhat tartly. We all recognised, however, that Sir William had either got drunk on the hill or had sprained an ankle when towards dusk we were presented with a picture somewhat like that of Randolph coming back with news of Flodden. Down the glen came the Brocach leading a slow-stepping hill pony on whose back no lordly stag was slung, but on which the great bulk of Sir William Carslake sagged and swayed in uneasy balance. The Brocach was careful to tell us, with ageing, mellowing glee, the events of that day.

It seems that the stalk they were engaged on was a long and difficult one. It involved much crawling and twisting about with crossings of gullies and corries in which the eddying wind made their approach upwind very tricky and slow. Unfortunately, much waiting was also involved, and Sir William, a steady enough man on the hill, made their monotony more cheerful with repeated draughts from his flask. The Brocach warned him of the trickiness of whisky under these conditions, but Sir William continued thus to while away the monotonous waits, only a new portentous

gravity showing the state he was getting into, and which the Brocach had not noticed, otherwise he would have stopped the stalk.

"But soon I noticed it fine," said the Brocach. "We had to scramble up a dry water-course, which would take us to within eighty yards of the stag we were after and give us a good shot over a patch of feeding ground, and I turned to Sir William and, 'Sir William,' I said, 'we'll have to crawl up this water-course, and the greatest care and quietness are needed for we're nearin' the stag.' 'Lead on, Brocach,' he said in a very grand manner, and I began to creep upwards on my belly. But we hadna gone more nor a few yards, Sir William breathin' terrible hard, nor he slipped and started all the bits o' stones in the dry burn rollin' and rollin' and rollin', and I saw the stag we had been stalkin' the whole morning cock his head up and then disappear over the ridge. I turned upon him, but, man, his face was a' red and purple, what wi' the whisky he had been drinkin', and the exertion at that high level, and I was kind o' scared for his heart.

"However, when he had got his breath back, 'Brocach,' he says, 'this sort of stalkin' has had its day. It's no' a sport beyond a

certain age, and drivin' will never do. But we'll lie here in this trench and we'll set bait for the deer. Set ye out this tumbler of whisky where that stag was feeding, and see if we canna tempt him back. If he recognises the smell he'll certainly come ; if not, curiosity will bring him. And we'll just be bidin' here with the rifle trained upon the tumbler.' He spoke very sober and solemn, and, to get the whisky awa' from him, I set it out as he said, and determined we would bide in the water-course until my gentleman had got sober again and I could take him down the hill. It wasna a light undertaking, ye see, to take a drunk man of Sir William's bulk down a rough hill, his heart bein' as it was, nor right that I should bring the ghillies and their ponies to see the state the gentleman was in.

"Well, we sat there crouched in the trench with our rifle trained on that poor tumbler, and aye Sir William would ask whether the bait was drawing yet, and aye I said, 'No doubt the deer are meetin' in council about the new smell,' at which he laughed and would say, 'Ay, we've set them a puzzle this time,' and I divided the food I had wi' me, hopin' it would soak up some of the whisky Sir William had inside him.

"His breathin' began to get easier now, and he began to speak more, very solemn and sober like the Judge he was in India. 'Drunkenness is a very sad state, Brocach,' he said, 'but it's the one way for a man to feel himself one wi' nature. Everything moves, ye see. The earth goes round, and the rivers fall to the sea, and the mountains to the plains, and the plains again to the sea, until a volcano comes and shoves them all up again. But we human beings try to keep steady, and neither to rise nor to fall nor to go round about, and that's why we're miserable. It's like standing in the centre of a revolving board, Brocach, at a seaside show. Ye simply canna keep it up for long, and ye're damned uncomfortable while ye are doing it. To feel yourself one wi' nature, Brocach, ye must go roundabout, and ye canna do that while sober. People wad think it very undignified o' ye.' He kept on talkin' a sort of drunken wisdom, and aye he, or me to humour him, kept looking along the rifle to see whether a stag was lappin' up the whisky we had set for it, and aye he wad say, 'Very sober stags ye keep here, Brocach, very sober indeed.' But soon he went off to sleep in the sunshine, and I lifted him into

the shady side o' the water-course and went off to get the ghillies and ponies up to a place where we could put Sir William on a pony and so bring him down the hill, explaining to them that the gentleman had been overcome by the hard work and the sun.

"Well, he woke up more sober like and I said, 'We'll have to be goin' down the hill, Sir William,' first having brought in our whisky bait from tempting the deer further. He felt a kind o' dazed and queer, and said, 'What's been happening, Brocach?' and I said, 'Just nothing at all, sir, and the world is still goin' round as ye can see by the sun. Ye've just been overworkin' yourself, but I'll help ye along to the ponies.' He was still very unsteady and unsafe upon his feet, so I took him by the middle and he put his arm round my shoulder and we set off for the ponies. We were getting along fine, though slowly, but had to pass a young birch tree, and Sir William puts out his hand and takes hold o' one o' the branches, and, when it gives way to him, says suddenly, 'The rope's slack, Brocach, and there must be no movin' until we see what's happened.' He was off on one o' his Alpine mountaineering ideas, I discovered, and as I was getting a

bit impatient by this time, I broke off the branch, and he held on to it and says, 'We must keep this as evidence that the rope wasna cut.' 'Ye can keep the whole tree to show what a very particular sort of rope ye've been using,' I said, 'but we maun be getting home,' and off we go again, he holding on to his bit branch very careful like; and by and by we got to the ponies where the ghillies a' saw fine what sort of sunstroke the gentleman had had, but didna say anything.

"We had an awful job getting him on to a pony, what wi' him being as he was, and very heavy, and aye holding on to his branch, which was to be his evidence, but that, too, we managed, and set off again, two of us, John Dunn and me, holding him up and him laughin' greatly to himself. He wad hold his branch in front o' him and say, 'Brocach, it's like the coming of peace. The birch leaves are no' like the olive, but it's the coming of peace.' And then when we got off the hill into the glen, and he saw that we were getting nearer home, 'Brocach,' he says, 'go ahead and tell the people of Dunraa to spread birch branches before me,' but I rebuked him terrible for being sacrilegious, and he said never another word. Ye saw how we looked

when we passed here on our way to the Castle, where I had to tell the Laird what had happened. He was terrible vexed, this being the first time Sir William had done it on the hill, and I'm thinkin' Sir William will never be allowed to go stalkin' on the Laird's forest again."

Despite his wrath at the ex-judge's irreligious merriment, the Brocach obviously enjoyed the experience, as did his family; only Evan abruptly said :—

"If it had been another stalker or me who got drunk ye wadna have laughed," which morose saying moved the Brocach to dire wrath. Alas, alas, it was true, but how could the Brocach explain? Things are different when looked at through a different atmosphere, and there was now no common ground between father and son.

Evan, too, soon got into rather bad trouble. Salmon-poaching is a form of excitement punishable by law, but Evan, with a band of his friends in the village, engaged on it one night. Evan, as I discovered when I spoke to him later about it, had set forth with none of his companion's ideas about the injustice of the rights of property and game, or even with a desire for a change of

diet, but simply for the excitement of a sport many of us have indulged in. He had enjoyed the stealthy stalk up the river in the dusk, the feeling that one of the men had a fishing-net secretly wound round his body, the silent netting in the darkness, with the exhilarating feeling that one was defying law, bailiffs, property, and other solemnities, and was having that most pleasurable thing, fun mixed with defiance, amidst rushing water, woods, and darkness. Evan had bad luck, however. On this, his first, venture, he was caught with the others, and it needed the Brocach's shamefaced interview with the Laird to get him to use his influence with the prosecution to get Evan off with the benefit of the First Offenders' Act and a caution. His father's confusion was complete, and Evan himself was very shamefaced for many weeks as a result of his eager adventure, and concealed his dislike of the Forest, and was very meek and humble in the Brocach's presence.

The Brocach was never one to admit that things were going badly with him, but he turned with great pleasure to young Alan Macleod, who now began to come a great deal to the Dubh Glen. Alan was a young

fellow, of Evan's age, son of the saw-miller, who lived within a reasonable distance, as measured in the Highlands, of the Dubh Glen. He was all that the Brocach had wished his own sons to be. He was a piper by instinct, and gladly came up to the Dubh Glen to be instructed by the Brocach in piping and all manner of Highland lore, listening to his stories with the rapt attention which once had been shown by the Fraser children, and regarding Dunraa as a place where life was pleasant and a thing to be accepted as a gift. The Brocach liked to have the quiet, intelligent Alan about the house, to see him play upon his own mighty pipes, like bending the bow of Ulysses, and listened sagely to all Alan's talk about his reading and his observations in the Forest, in which he was waiting for a job, meantime helping his father, the hearty saw-miller. For all that he was constantly held up to Evan and Nellie as an example of what a young man ought to be, Alan was great friends with the two of them. He always brought a soberly pleasant atmosphere with him, soothing the Brocach and his fears, gaining a ready entrance to Elspet's affections, and joining Evan and Nellie in

whatever fun was agoing in that lonely glen.

But it was a feverish, unsettled period, these four or five years following Simon Beg's departure, with that young raw family knowing nothing of life but its attractions away from the glen, and the Brocach worrying about the Laird's progress towards a hopeless recovery, and running at loggerheads with his family because, heedless of the present realities, he wished to force them into his own way because of a golden past. It was a period of marking time, of waiting for a crash, and everybody knew it except the Brocach, who was always able to deceive himself.

And all this time the smiling, gracious Elspet sat there, always ailing and always happy, watching her family develop, and foreseeing the coming family conflicts and no doubt wondering what her influence could do.

CHAPTER VII

EMIGRATION

NELLIE, now a fine grown girl of some eighteen years, had been promoted; she was housekeeper to the Brocach and the ailing Elspet. When the Brocach came in from his "farm," or his stalking, or other lawful occasions, he would grin broadly at his favourite and say, "Well, good woman, what are ye going to give us to eat the day?" and make scathing comments on the fare provided, and Nellie would answer in like humour, and Elspet would smile at their bantering fun, while Nellie affected to "mother" Evan and Alan.

This arrangement had already been in force for some time when I first encountered it one Christmas, and was consequent upon Jean's having gone into domestic service in London. Her quiet, capable ways while engaged as chamber-maid at the Dunraa Arms Hotel during the season, had appealed to Mr and Mrs Hickman, who, with their

family, had resided there for many years during the autumn; they had asked her to come to London with them and she had accepted. So long as she continued in their service her life consisted of going the social round with the Hickmans—London, Melton Mowbray, Cowes, and, when they came up to Dunraa, she came home on leave. Each time she came home her manner of dress was a further degree removed from her native style, and her speech slightly "more English," but she never lost her quiet manner or that premature sadness which sometimes comes to grey eyes and always seems cosmic rather than an indication of personal sorrow. And each time she came back it was obvious, though she never said so, that the ways of the glens were becoming stranger and even more solitary and less human than they were. Her home-comings and her letters were always eagerly awaited by Nellie, who loved the social gossip and movement of which they were full.

The Brocach saw no further disintegration of the family in Jean's departure. To him it was the most natural thing in the world that the elder daughter should go into service, as her mother had done before her,

and he reckoned she would come back, just as her mother had done. She had had no love affair, but had always been popular at Games and Village Dance, and could no doubt marry well in the village when she wished to, just as Elspet had done. Besides, her going tied Nellie more to the Forest. Elspet saw deeper.

"Jean will never come back to the Forest," she told me one day. "The young folks are restive in the glens nowadays, wanting to be awa' and in among the stir o' things, and Jean has nothing at all to come back to. The young men here, even if they bide, are no keen on marryin' the way things are going, and Jean will bide wi' the Hickmans or marry some English body who can keep her in the outside world. Anyway, she's lost to the Forest, but the Brocach doesna see it yet." Elspet could not, any more than the rest of us, foretell the future.

It was altogether a jolly Christmas, with the hills white from top to bottom and that sheen on them that comes of strong sunlight on snow, and, at nights, a hard, quivering frost, with the tiny stars infinitely remote in the deep intense night sky. The full remaining population of the glen was present, Evan,

a fine strapping fellow, two years older than Nellie, having come down from one of the outlying glens where he had been hay-feeding the deer, and Donald Beg, Lamont's boy across the water, having come up from Glasgow. Lamont, who had no ideas of loyalty to an impecunious Forest, was doing well by his only boy, and had sent him for a year or two's "schooling" at Glasgow, where he was now finishing a course of wireless telegraphy preparatory to going to sea as wireless operator. There were, too, a Ghillies' Ball at the Castle, and a Village Dance in the Village Hall, and at each of them Nellie was the centre of a little crowd and was full of high spirits and flirting. She danced a lot with Donald Beg, a good-looking lad with a comic swagger, what with his Glasgow schooling and his Glasgow clothes, but still rather awed himself by his new found greatness.

"Ye mustna dance so much wi' Donald Beg," said the Brocach to Nellie after the first dance, and "No, father," she had answered, but somewhat dryly, so that Elspet looked up at her, but nothing further was said on the matter, and at the next dance she danced with Donald Beg as much as before.

She was a wilful little girl, Nellie. At the end of that dance the Brocach, Evan, and I met by arrangement to go home together, but there was no sign of Nellie.

"Where's Nellie, Evan?" asked the Brocach in a somewhat sharp voice.

"I havena seen her for sometime back," answered Evan, and, although we waited until the Village Hall was cleared, we still saw no sign of her. Then someone said he had seen Nellie and Donald Beg go off together and take the road up to the glen.

"Then we'll just be taking the glen road, too," said the Brocach in a toneless voice, and we set off for home in the intensely frosty night that almost cracked our skins. Although the Brocach set a quick pace for a hillman and spoke hardly a word in presence of this open revolt of his favourite with the son of the Presbyterian Lamont, we overtook the rebels only at the kitchen door of Glenmore Lodge, where Lamont was speaking to them. For a moment there was a tense atmosphere in the snow-lit starry darkness, and then—

"What are ye doin' there, Nellie?" said the Brocach quietly, stopping some distance

from the kitchen door. "Come over here and we'll just be crossin' over the burns home Lamont, ye'll oblige me by tellin' Donald Beg that he must have nothing to do wi' my daughter."

"Ay," said Lamont, "I was just telling them both that we'll hae nothing to do wi' Papists in this family."

"That's a hard word, Donald Lamont, but I'll no' be choosing your words for ye. Nellie, come awa'," and the Brocach laid his hand on her shoulder, and together we crossed over the two little burns to the Dubh Glen where Elspet was long since asleep. Nellie, very silent and scared, went straight off to bed, and the Brocach said never a word. Nor, of course, was any further reference to the incident ever spoken in my presence.

Christmas passed over without further jolt to mar its snowy cheerfulness, but between Christmas and Easter, when I came up again, a momentous thing had happened. Evan had spoken of Canada, and the prospects of his going there.

"And I'm no' sure but what he isna right in going," said Elspet, who, as usual, was first to tell me of what bad news there was

concerning the family. "The Brocach just willna hear of it at all, at all, but I'm thinkin' I'll be able to bring him round a bittie. It's no' as if the Forest had anything to offer a young man who bided on. It just hasna. And it'll no be right that we should stand between Evan and his success in life. I'll no have it said that we kept Evan back while other folk's children got on. No, indeed." Gently brave Elspet, who would inflict the cruel wound of separation on herself rather than stand in Evan's way: loyal, loyal Brocach, who wished to offer a sacrifice to an impecunious Laird and his native glens.

"The Brocach's goin' to have a sore time of it, indeed, indeed," went on Elspet. "Evan will go, must go, and very likely he'll go with Alastair Grant, whose father is fishing ghillie to the Dunraa Arms Hotel, and is going out in July, to be in time for the harvesting work on the prairies. But I'm feared mostly about Nellie, who is a terrible handful. Aye helpful and that willin' to work, but so terribly high-spirited and wilful, and aye wantin' down to the village where she can meet folk and have her laugh and her bit fun. Nellie is no' meant for the glen

life; it had been much better had she gone to London and Jean bided here. But the Brocach is that set upon her bidin' here and marryin' here and settlin' down here that he's more wrathful when I speak of Nellie's goin' away than of Evan's. Indeed he is, he was aye that wrapped up in her." Obviously the Brocach was bent on indulging in one of those impossible Scottish loyalties, and the family's protection was to be the humaner determination of the ailing, gracious Elspet.

I spent that year from Easter to late autumn in the Dubh Glen, busy with a manuscript I wished to finish in leisurely peace; and during the first few months the Brocach made no mention of the conflict that was going on within the family. Then June came with its fresh and jocund colouring, when the hillsides seemed carpeted with velvet, and the larches were in their fresh greenery, and all the waters ran clear and joyously, and the nights were grey dusk rather than dark. But this June also brought with it great activity in the Dubh Glen, with much measuring of garments, and stitching and sewing, and repairing of old garments which were still worth it, and the arrival of a brand new travelling trunk into which the results of all

this stitching and sewing were carefully stowed away. There also appeared above the kitchen mantelpiece an advertisement photograph of a Donaldson liner on the Canadian route, towering above the tugs which fussed about at her bows, and with a sailing-ship somewhere on her port to testify to out-of-date things. Obviously Evan was going to Canada, his outfit being prepared, and his passage booked. The determination of Evan and his powerful ally, Elspet, had routed the Brocach.

How that joint victory was accomplished, and the Brocach's resistance broken down, I never knew. I only know that one day towards the end of June the Brocach, who had been rather depressed for some weeks back, joined me on the bench at the end of his house, facing the sunset, and began :—

"Just another fortnight now and Evan will be awa'."

"To Canada?" I queried. "Elspet told me that he was thinking of going."

"Yes, yes. We have been talking it over, Elspet and me, and we think it the best thing that Evan could do. Ye see, it's a grand country, Canada, with a lot of ground no' yet brought under cultivation, and a grand

chance for everyone that works and doesna tire too soon. Just look here," he went on, drawing from his pocket and showing me various emigration pamphlets, each with a picturesque homestead in the centre of a prairie whose golden corn rolled away into illimitable distances, the harvesting being carried on by healthy young emigrant owners with a fine air of well-being and contentment about them. In each of these healthy owners, with his air of well-being, the Brocach pictured a future Evan, and was finding in these emigration pamphlets the healing balm for the wounding wrench they caused.

"Evan was aye a grand worker," he went on, fingering these poor shreds of comfort; "keen on his work, and with a very good understanding of beasts and crops so far as it can be picked up in a Highland glen. It'll be hard work at the beginning, no doubt about it, but Evan willna mind that, and we can give him a good enough start. Elspet and me havena hurried our judgment on the matter, but have carefully considered it in all its bearings, and we have both come to the conclusion that Evan had better have his share of what Canada can give." He talked on a good deal more about Evan's

imminent departure, speaking always in the manner in which Elspet had reasoned with me and overcome him, and always emphasising the "we" element in the decision, as though he had required no persuasion to agree to one of his two last hopes being thus finally shattered. Curious are men's hopes and defeats and delusions.

Stitching and sewing activity became almost fierce as the time of departure drew nigh, and there were many meetings between Evan and Alastair Grant, who was to go with him, and the two families, when they met, felt drawn towards each other by a common feeling of the pathetic beginning a future fortune may have. On a Thursday afternoon the brand new travelling-trunk was finally filled up, locked, labelled, and despatched to Dunraa village by a cart, which had been up to Glenmore Lodge with stores for some repairs being done to outhouses, there to be picked up by Evan on the morrow. He was due to leave the glen on the Friday morning, reach Glasgow by night, stay overnight with the Brocach's sergeant cousin, Hamish Fraser, and Simon Beg, and on the Saturday night tide drop down the river to the outer seas.

Emigration, even when hope is radiant at the far end of the sunlit prairies of Canadian emigration pamphlets, is a sharp affair for those engaged in it, and I was up betimes that Friday morning, determined to decamp early and spend the day on the hills, leaving the Frasers to their desolation. I said good-bye to Evan on the doorstep, and looked at him, admiring how he had grown and filled out since that far day when, as a boy, he had retrieved my abandoned *impedimenta* from the shores of the haunted loch. A fine straight fellow, in build and in character, he looked the very type that Canada wants, but that day was a curious mixture of scare, excitement, and nervous smiles, wholly abashed at being the hero of the hour. Elspet looked on at our farewell with that quiet smile of hers, and the Brocach, with all the punch out of him, cracked some feeble jokes.

I lay out on the hills all that hot Friday, and mentally saw the various stages of Evan's journey. The ailing Elspet would accompany him, the Brocach, and Nellie, as far as the second bridge between the Dubh Glen and the Lodge and then turn back alone. At the Lodge they would be picked up, I imagined, —and I was correct, I later discovered—by

Lamont, who would accompany the little party some distance down the carriage road and then say good-bye, and what a pity it was that Donald Beg was in Glasgow, but no doubt he would come to the boat to see Evan off. The manifold revelations of God can be forgotten in these moments of poignant parting. Then the Brocach, Evan, and Nellie would go down alone to the village, where they would be joined by Alastair Grant and his family, and nearly all the village would come to the motor-bus to cheer them off. Then the arrival in Glasgow, the first city Evan had seen, and, on the morrow, the excited drive with other emigrants in a horse char-a-banc around that smoky hive, cheering and generally keeping one's courage up, until it was time to embark. Then the jostling and crowding on gangway and quay, the cheers and anguished cries and weeping as the great black emigrant ship cast off, and was hung up while the tugs swung her head downstream; and then another great cheer as, once swung, she gradually drew away into the gathering murkiness of the night, taking with her some who had wished to leave, and some, like Evan, whom the folly of others had deprived of their chance of livelihood.

It was late in the afternoon when I returned to the Dubh Glen, and the sun was striking full on the kitchen window. In strange contrast with the peacefully grazing Hagar was the figure of the Brocach, walking with quick, agitated steps up and down the banks of the burn, his kilt nervous and agitated as when he had been discussing God with Lamont. I avoided him and passed through the little gate, to enter the house. I had to pass the kitchen window, and, as I did so, caught in a flash what that day had meant. Full in the track of the sun pouring through the window sat Elspet, her apron thrown over her head and face, while she rocked herself backwards and forwards in her chair in a great agony of grief. I would have gone away but she had heard my step and came to the door to meet me. Tears were of no avail for her, and it was a face stamped with dry-eyed, hollow-eyed despair that she turned towards me.

"Ye'll be wantin' your tea," she said with a great effort at her usual graciousness. I made some confused remark about this being a sad day for her and let her make tea, thinking it better she should busy herself with something.

"That will be Nellie ye hear upstairs," she remarked, when she brought tea, with reference to a low, moaning sound that came from above. "She's taken it terrible bad. They aye liked to be together." And whether in that moaning was envy of Evan's escape into the big world and dread of being now alone in the glen, Nellie alone knows. I spent that evening with the Presbyterian Lamont, who was also badly shaken by this tearing up of roots. Something terrible lurks about the hope with which Canada is invested in the Highlands.

Except for one brief interlude, the Brocach never recovered from Evan's departure. He still joked and piped and loved a good talk, but the old real verve had gone out of the man. The Brocach was never the man to acknowledge defeat, preferring the comfort of an illusion to the brutality of a fact, whether that fact was his defeat on the question of Evan's departure or the inevitable death of Dunraa as he had known it, and to let his great spirit flame up in presence of disaster. But it was always easy to see through the Brocach's feigned heroics, and, when I have seen the Laird speaking to his chief piper, I have wondered just how much

the Laird realised what his youthful extravagances had meant. He certainly realised a good deal, and was always very solicitous in his inquiries about Evan and Simon Beg, and was no doubt conscious of the fact that his late recovery could never atone for those youthful excesses of a man in a position of trust towards others. Be that as it may, another flower had been "wede away" from the Forest, and, like the lasses in that sad song, at bottom the Brocach, except for a brief interlude, was really "dowie and wae." Jean and Simon Beg were doing well, and, ere I left late that autumn, news came that Evan was earning good money as a harvester. That was all to the good, although somewhat clouded by the later news that the Canadian harvest had been got in and that Evan could get nothing better to do than track work on the Canadian Pacific Railway, which had nothing in common with the rolling prairies of the emigration pamphlets. He was suffering from the drawback of having learned no trade. But the Brocach had seen three of his four children go. His dearest wish, as a devoted father and loyal servant of Dunraa, that he should leave someone behind on Dunraa, and prefer-

ably on a Dunraa owned by the Laird, depended for its fulfilment upon his last line of defence. And that last line of defence was the wilful, high-spirited, rebellious Nellie.

CHAPTER VIII

LOVE AND GRIEF

Love had come to the glens. Its bearer was Alan Macleod, and the object of his votive offering was Nellie.

Alan had developed into one of the best young men in the Forest, and quite after the Brocach's heart. Tall, and with a frank, open face, he was now one of the most promising pipers under the Brocach's leadership, and had a good local reputation for running and hammer-throwing at the Games. He had read all the miscellaneous reading to be found in the various houses on the Forest, was keenly interested in the plant and insect life around him, and could talk sagely with the Brocach about Highland caterans and clan warfare and the intricacies of that old dispute as to the leadership of the confederate Clan Chattan, the Brocach holding that the chieftainship was held by rights by The Mackintosh, while Alan, with all deference to the Brocach's weighty opinion,

always pronounced *ex cathedra*, thought the Cluny Macpherson ought to have it. He had got his hoped-for job on the Forest, as a watcher to warn off trespassers as the shooting season approached, and as ghillie, living in a lonely bothy far up the Dubh Glen, towards the Duneir march, where he spent the week almost alone, rarely seeing any one, but reading diligently books and newspapers he had fetched from the Brocach's house on his way up to the Bothy, and diligently watching the natural life around him when not reading. He was a first-rate ghillie, and was due to get the first stalker's post, with its corollary, a house, that fell vacant. A quiet-mannered, courteous man, with no thought of emigration, one could imagine him growing up as the Brocach had done, full of Highland lore and hospitality, and carrying on the great tradition. I had often met him during my potterings up the glen and in the Brocach's kitchen, and had known he was one of the young gallants who had Nellie as their Fair at Ghillies' Ball or Village Dance. He was a Catholic.

His acceptance by the family as a lover deserving encouragement began sometime during the winter following on Evan's de-

parture. When I came up again the ensuing summer the love-making was in the full flood of its fervour.

The Brocach was himself again. Here was a Catholic fixture in Dunraa, with good prospects, upright and "learned," making love to the very member of his family on whom all his hopes were now set. He chaffed Nellie, and chaffed Alan, whom he had always liked to have about the house, and took intrusive me for aimless walks outside, whilst Elspet went into the milk-house, and the doting Alan and the high-spirited Nellie were left alone indoors.

"Man, man," he said to me, "Alan's a brave lad, with a wonderful knowledge o' deer and the pipes and book-learning, and the factor, Donald Stewart, tells me he is to get Sandy M'Gregor's house and beat when Sandy, who is getting old, retires, which may be any season now. It's a fine house, Sandy's, and Nellie, with her way of doing things, will look fine there and make Alan just as comfortable as can be."

Alan usually spent Saturday night, on his way down from the bothy to his father's house, and Monday forenoon, on his way up again, with the Frasers, and cheerful was the

atmosphere he brought with him. There was usually a lot of piping on these occasions, Alan being very keen on it, and the Brocach sitting listening intently to all he played.

"Your drones are a bit heavy," he would say critically, "a wee twist, Alan, and ye'll have it. Ay, that's it, that's it, doin' nicely, man," he would counsel; or, "It's no the drones, Alan, it's the bag that's got a bit too dry. She'll be needin' the *usquebaugh*," and with that the dry bagpipes would be dissected and the bag turned inside out and plentifully steeped in whisky until it felt soft and pliable again; or, "Man, Alan, that's no the time for a reel. Ye'll have all the dancers weepin' and wonderin' what they're dancin' and weepin' for at the same time. Give me your pipes, man," with a bit of a snap, and he would take Alan's pipes and play a reel with the proper swing and beat of the thing, the quiet, brown-eyed Alan sitting the while looking at Nellie, as one does who feels as Alan.

Hope had shot up again in the Brocach's heart. "I just hope it willna be a long engagement," he said to me once. "Jean will come home and keep house for Elspet

and me, and Nellie and Alan can marry the minute they agree."

So far, however, there was no engagement. Is there to be one, I sometimes wondered to myself. Nellie was obviously irked by the glen life, loved to read the *Daily Sketch* and *Daily Mirror*, which sometimes arrived at the house from the Dunraa Arms Hotel, or was sent by Jean or some mindful visitor, and to think and talk about the great life outside the Forest. She laughed and joked with the Brocach and Alan, but did she love? My wonder, I discovered, was shared by Elspet.

"I'm aye telling the Brocach he shouldna build too much upon Nellie and Alan marrying," she confided to me one day. "Nellie's no broken into the glen ways yet, and the glen quiet. She likes a stir and a lot o' folk and excitement. We had some trouble wi' her and Donald Beg last winter, and the Brocach was terrible upset about it. He's got very taking ways now, and Nellie thinks he's out in the big world and looks up to him greatly because of it."

"What's Donald Beg doing now?"

"He's gone off to sea—wireless operator on board a big tramp steamer. He came

home last winter from his first voyage, and lookin' so bonny and smart wi' his uniform and the new English way he's getting of talking. His first voyage was to the Levant, I think he called it, and he brought home some bonny things wi' him, and Nellie was greatly excited over the things he told her and showed her."

"So Donald Beg is becoming a traveller and man of the world."

"Aye, and I'm thinking it would be better for Nellie if she saw a bit of it, too. I'm always tellin' the Brocach we ought to take Jean home for a bit and give Nellie a chance, and see whether the world is just as exciting as she imagines, but he'll just no hear of it and rages terrible when I speak of it. He's *that* set upon Nellie marrying Alan. But it's no good for Nellie that she should know nothing but the glen, where she's been more nor lonely since only the old folk are left here."

Alan was obviously making no great progress. Nellie was bright and happy when he came to the house, as she was when anyone came to relieve the monotony of the glen, but after those private colloquies which the Brocach with simple cunning contrived to let them have, Alan's face had a somewhat

sore expression on it, with hope struggling valiantly to defeat the baffled happiness that would keep surging into it. Nor could the Brocach derive any satisfaction from his favourite Nellie when he spoke to her on the subject. Nellie was putting up a fight against being wedded to the lonely glens.

Things were at this stage of uncertainty, hopefulness, and stubborn resistance when Donald Beg came home from his second voyage in July. And his coming caused hope and apprehension in the Dubh Glen.

I was interested to see him again after his voyagings. Elspet was right. His uniform made him look "bonny and smart," with its gold braid and the company's badge at the peak of his cap. He carried himself with a certain jaunty swagger, and was open and of a hearty, laughing disposition, although his walk was ever so comic, the hillman's dragging stride, which he had not yet shaken out of his legs, being comically mixed up with his partially acquired seaman's roll. He was determined we should all know he was a man of the world. When I met him one night in the glen, when returning from a day's tramp, I asked if he was coming over to the Dubh Glen. "No," he said, "you see, I've

got to go home and attend this b——y family worship," this being his newly acquired method of referring to the solemn function of family worship which the Presbyterian Lamont maintained, and which countless generations of Scotsmen have called, with bated breath, "the Reading."

There was a watchful anxiety in the Dubh Glen during Donald Beg's fortnight's leave. The Brocach kept Nellie about the house as much as possible, and when she was not there, was constantly looking out for her in the glen in case she was with the feared Donald Beg. When she had to go to the village, on shopping intent, there were anxious fears lest Donald Beg should be there too, and her return was carefully watched lest the wireless operator should be accompanying her. Sometimes she went to the village for no ostensible reason whatsoever, and on one of these occasions, and they always caused lowering clouds in the Dubh Glen, she came up to me, accompanied by Donald Beg, when we met by accident in the village street, and said hurriedly, "Father doesna know we're here," which shows how a request to say nothing can be contained in a categorical statement of simple truth. Alan looked sore and grieved

all during that fatal fortnight, and there was no piping, but only anxious councils of war, the Brocach, torn between his love of his favourite Nellie and his cruel anxiety, sometimes cajoling and sometimes terrible in his wrath; Elspet, who told me what was going on, siding with the Brocach against Donald Beg, but asking for a chance for Nellie to get away from the glen for a bit; and Nellie more stubborn and wilful than ever. The relief was correspondingly great when Donald Beg went off again to rejoin his ship, although, at times, Nellie had a somewhat frightened, pre-occupied look about her. By the time I left in the autumn that look had deepened, and Alan was plodding along his lover's steep path again.

In reply to my Christmas greetings that year, it was 1911, came a letter from Elspet, the first I had ever received. It announced that Nellie's condition was such that it could no longer be hidden, and that she and the Brocach thought it best that Nellie should go to Glasgow and live with the Brocach's cousin, Hamish Fraser, of the Partick Police, until the baby was born. They wished to save her being looked at in the village. Donald Beg was the father, and although

he had promised Nellie he would marry her and give the baby his name, the Brocach had made her refuse, Donald Beg not being a Catholic, and the baby was expected about the end of March. One of Elspet's young nieces was coming up from the village to keep house during Nellie's absence. The Brocach was that terrible upset and that quiet and gentle, and Alan just didna know what to say, but just went about dazed and dumb-like ; but they all joined in wishing me a happy New Year, and when was I coming up to the Forest again ?

And Nellie went to Glasgow and stayed with Hamish Fraser, sergeant in the Partick Police, and under these unusual circumstances had her first experience of city life. And no doubt Hamish Fraser and his wife, and Simon Beg and his wife, for he had married and had a stripe by this time, and all their friends, were unendingly good to her, but always with that maddening air of commiserating with a sinner taken in the act. And no doubt she was pleased when the end of March came and it was all over, and she was delivered of a son which, by the grace of God, was still-born, and she could go back to the glen alone, and hide in that great

solitude far from prying eyes except those that understood and forgave fully.

Illegitimacy is a phenomenon in Scotland whose awfulness and the interest aroused by it are never diminished by the frequency of its occurrence. An unmarried girl with child is a marked person; friends and relatives assume a hang-dog look of pitying understanding and commiseration with her and her family; there is always a self-righteous, awkward clearing of throats before conversation can be begun, and, when the girl passes down the village street, she sees commiserating eyes furtively looking at her and hears a dry cough, a *hoast* they call it, when she has passed. Nothing is left undone to make her feel that she is pitied by the anointed of the Lord.

Nellie knew this and must have dreaded her home-coming to Dunraa village and the passing through it on her way to the glen road. She was awaited at the motor-bus stopping-place by the Brocach and the local priest, Father Grant, who, of course, knew everything, and told me later how Nellie came home. The usual crowd which awaits the motor-bus was augmented on this occasion by all those who had heard somehow that

the erring Nellie was coming by it. There was some *hoasting* as usual, when the Brocach, supported by Father Grant, arrived, but the Brocach would have none of it, but was blatantly effusive and talked in a loud voice with every one, and put their hang-dog looks to rout. Then the bus arrived, and there was a silence as Nellie, looking hard-faced and sullen, stepped off it, and everyone leaned forward to hear the greetings, while contriving, somehow, to look the other way as though disinterested and concerned only with clearing his throat.

"Well, Nellie," said the Brocach in a loud, challenging voice for the crowd to hear, "ye've got back again."

"Ay, father," she said.

"Ye'll be wantin' a cup o' tea, like?"

"No, father."

"Then we'll just be goin' up the glen road," said the Brocach, and linking his arm within hers, the two of them, supported by Father Grant, made their way through the village. People whom they met coughed and touched their hats, or bowed and would have passed by silently, but the Brocach would have none of that either. "It's a grand evenin', Peter Robertson," he would shout to one, and "Ay,

ye're stepping home, John," to another, and "I hope your man is getting better, Mrs Macintosh," to a third, all shouted in a blatant, challenging manner which defied people to look askance at his daughter or to commiserate with him or with her. Nellie had had a fall, but the Brocach, and his defiantly whisking kilt, were bearing witness that Frasers knew how to forgive and how to hold high their heads.

Father Grant, good man, left them when they got beyond the last of the village houses, and together they went up the lonely glen road. So, while the evening mists gathered in the hollows of the hills and drifted about the feathery tops of the larches, and the early April evening air was sweet and fresh, the Brocach and his favourite Nellie came home together. What they talked about during that home-coming I do not know, but some little distance below the plantation which surrounds the Glenmore Lodge, in whose kitchen dwelt the Presbyterian Lamont, they were met by Elspet, who had come to shepherd them past that danger-spot where the Brocach might have exploded. And so together the remaining three in the Dubh Glen crossed over the two burns

which run between the Lodge and that little house, and Nellie was home again.

"And when Nellie had taken off her things," said Elspet to me later, "and saw everything just as it was before, she just sat down and she cried and cried and cried. Indeed, indeed, how she cried. And the Brocach and me said never a word to her, knowing it was best that she should cry her fill, and I just got out the dishes and laid the supper. And we just spoke about Simon Beg and his wife, who are coming up here soon, and about Hamish Fraser, who is soon to retire on a pension, and about Glasgow. And when supper was finished Nellie went off to bed, and next morning came down again and went on wi' her work as though nothing had happened at all, at all, and since she came back we've never spoken a word about the matter nor about Donald Beg."

But great events have their reactions however much they may be ignored in conversation. This particular event had the effect of leaving the Brocach a broken man. Never again did hope rise in his heart or did the old Brocach flash out in his conversation, and only once, much later, did he nerve himself to a great endeavour. He was all

adroop—angry snap, kilt, bearing, conversation, everything—and the man who had evoked the admiration of the Falkirk Tryst, the Laird, and the Games, was now heavy with premature ageing. He was now dull and lifeless, the spring and elasticity gone out of him, and with none of that secret reserve of strength which never failed the ailing Elspet. As a result of these recent disintegrating movements, Elspet was greyer than before and her graciousness somewhat sadder, but still, as ever, contented and winning. So much greater is human understanding than a clinging with loyal, blind devotion to things but dimly worth it.

The reaction was as great on Nellie. These accounts of her home-coming were given me much later, when I came up late in the summer, by which time Nellie was a changed girl. Gone were the high spirits and the wilfulness, gone the eagerness and the fun. Gone, to be replaced by a Nellie with a more developed figure, with sullen, smouldering resentment clouding her brown eyes, and a hopeless air as of a bird which had attempted to wing its way to freedom only to be brought down again and ensnared. She was still busy and expert about the

house as before, still as helpful and obliging —but that unnatural quietness, that abandonment to her defeat! I think we all moved and spake more warily lest, all unwittingly, we should strike her a blow.

Donald Beg never came up to the Glens again, but his father sometimes went down to Glasgow to see him when his ship came in. As for Alan, he still came in to the Dubh Glen as of yore in his passings backwards and forwards, and was always as quiet and courteous.

Such was the position of the Dubh Glen before the final crash came. This was not the Dubh Glen I had known, that Dubh Glen of my first arrival, when the Brocach had piped to me and asked if I had heard him, and Elspet had raised a laugh by suggesting to the Brocach that it was time "to go home." This was another Dubh Glen, with only the grey, winning Elspet smiling amidst the ruins of that little family, with a broken-spirited father, a broken-spirited daughter, and the three vacant places.

CHAPTER IX

THE BROCACH BREAKS DOWN

That final crash coincided practically with Nellie's home-coming. My first intimation of it was in the *Times* one April morning when I was carelessly scanning the back page, more interested in the photographs of the properties for sale than in the properties themselves. All of a sudden my careless attention was arrested by and concentrated on a notice announcing that the famous Forest of Dunraa, with Dunraa Castle, was for sale, and, sure enough, there was a photograph of the Castle itself, with its turrets and crow-stepped gables, and winding river in front of it, and mountains and woods rising steeply from behind. The acreage was stated, the number of Lodges and beats, the number of heads annually obtained, with information about the crofts, farms, and the salmon and trout fishings, and a statement that all shooting and fishing

leases had expired and that the new owner could obtain unencumbered possession that year, as from Whitsunday. An historical note on the property appeared in the "Estate Market" column.

So the Laird has not "won through," I reflected, thinking of that stout assertion with which the Brocach had attempted to deceive his fears. This was a desperate thing to have happened, I knew, but I could not forbear from smiling as I thought of the eager gossiping there would be throughout Dunraa when the dread news was spread and of the speculation on who the new owner would be and the economic effects of the change. A new historic date had been inscribed on the Dunraa calendar, to which events would be referred in time—"The year, ye know, that Dunraa was sold." And obviously I would have to go up as soon as possible and hear all about it and see the new broom sweeping. I rather grudged that I could not get up before August.

On the sale day, the Forest was duly knocked down to Mr J. Linton Smith, produce broker in the City, regarding whom "Who's Who" was silent, but who, apparently, had conceived Highland ambitions.

August came, and, with it, the usual crowded train to Glasgow, whence one takes the West Highland line express. Who does not know Highland travelling? And who that knows it does not love it? Up steep ascents we climbed on the West Highland line, with infinite effort and puffing, and watching with delight the moors running away from us up to the hills, and the leaping cascades of the river up whose course the line ran, to poise momentarily, as it seemed, on the crest of the ridge, and then, with steam shut off, to slither down the other side. By river and lake shore, by glen and rolling moor, we sped until at last we got to the station whence one takes the motor-bus to Dunraa or the other places fed by that station. It was refreshing to see that station platform again on a busy August day. Porters looked with dismay at the piles of luggage they had to handle, and there was many a softly sibilant "Well, well," and "No, indeed," and "Oich, oich, the whole world will be coming to the Highlands, indeed, indeed," as they bravely tackled it; while these foreign people, "the English," in their fine "plus fours," stalked about amongst the piles and signed that this gun-

case and that fishing-rod case, and not that but this golf-kit belonged to them, and shooting tenant, porter, ghillie, crofter, and keepers with retrievers and pointers on leashes, all got mixed up in a highly good-humoured crowd. Then another crowding and seeming confusion as we all sorted ourselves out in the station square, some getting into their own private cars, and some into hotel buses, and some into the railway motor-bus, and student reading parties, who were to walk, seeming always to stand at the entrance to the buses, and a handing-up of luggage and stowing away of all things, human and inanimate, by processes of management and squeezing which made us all feel contemptuous of an army which can never move without staff preparation while we all managed it of our own accord and good sense and tolerance. Then a sounding of horns and purring of engines while the motor hosts moved off, a great cloud of dust and smell of petrol rose on high, a cheer was raised in the station square as we gathered way, and the great event of the day was over.

I never smell petrol on the hottest London day but it brings the Dunraa road back to

me, and I see the advance along its delightful line. As we careered along it that August day in our railway motor-bus, we dived from one dust-cloud into another as car or rival bus or horse char-a-banc passed or overtook us, but the dust and petrol strangely intermingled with the tang of pine and heather and bog myrtle and peat. In the lucid intervals, we could see the crofters at harvesting work, the women's white sun-hats and red blouses gleaming amidst the corn patches as the patches gleamed amidst the dun-coloured heath. Sometimes we seemed to be charging into the face of a hill, but a sudden turn in the road revealed to us instead long vistas stretching into filmy-blue distances. Sometimes we stopped at a wayside inn and discharged a passenger or two, sometimes we stopped for no apparent reason at all until some excited children or pleasant-faced woman came through an undetected gate in the fencing and was handed the post and we knew that some houses lay behind the dense wood, flanking the road, and that the children had come to get both the post and the daily excitement of the bus. And as the day advanced and the sun got lower, a deeper glow seemed to flush the

heather, and the strange hush that follows the active day and heralds the oncoming of evening descended on all things, and tree and rock and sharp summit became sharper in the sharper air. Until we got to the village of Dunraa where the village came down to the post-office, at which the bus stops, to see the new arrivals and utter whispered criticisms of them. As usual, I went off to have tea with Elspet's cousin, Mary Campbell, to hear the local gossip from her and to go through that annual joke of ours, I saying to her :—

"I hope you've let your house well, Mary?"

"Yes, yes, indeed."

"Glasgow folk?"

"No, indeed," with a fine scorn, "gentry," with vast pride, this annual joke, which began in all seriousness, showing that aristocratic August and September are reserved for "the English," a wealthy foreign race.

Then, lunch with Mary Campbell finished, off I went on foot the ten-mile stretch that leads from the August, "boom" month, turmoil of a Highland village into the lonely solitude of the heart of Dunraa Forest.

For the last time the Brocach met me as of yore at the first bridge one crosses between Glenmore Lodge and the Dubh Glen. It was a serious and undisguisedly pleased welcome he gave me in place of the old welcome with a snap to it and the chaffing manner in which he had formerly laughed at my frequent appearances in the glen, usually inquiring which "kelpie" or which haunted loch had driven me down to him this time. Such unrelated events as Nellie's premature motherhood and the sale of Dunraa had combined at least in this, they had together broken the Brocach after that happy interlude when his hopes had run high on Alan and Nellie.

But the Brocach, if breaking up, was breaking up gamely. He still spoke with indomitable hope, to which voice and appearance gave the utter lie.

"No," he said, while I was having dinner in the kitchen to hear all the news, "Mr Linton Smith hasna come up yet. As ye know, there isna much grouse hereabouts, everything having been kept for the deer, so Mr Linton Smith is biding with a friend of his in Perthshire busy among the grouse until the stags are ready in September.

We're goin' to give him a great welcome when he comes up with his lady and a big house-party they're having. It's just going to be like the old days again, man, with much entertaining, and an owner with a lot of money and just spending it in a very brave way, as the Laird did, only Mr Linton Smith can better afford it."

"So the Forest is going to revive, is it? Work for everybody and a boom in industry?"

"Man, man, there are just goin' to be great days in the Forest. Mr Linton Smith is going to start in upon the grouse and stock the lower ground wi' them, and keep the higher hills and the Sanctuary for the deer. And he's goin' to come up every year at the beginning of August once the grouse are in good order, and there is to be a long season, and some talk of afforestation, and everything to be given a new life. I'm thinkin' we'll be gettin' Evan back from Canada, when he hears what is going to happen here. He's no' doing so very well in Canada, ye see, and there's aye been a Fraser on Dunraa Forest, and when Evan hears that the Forest is going to be worthy of the Frasers, even though the Laird is

awa', he'll be wanting to come back, I'll be thinkin'."

So did the Brocach talk of the new order of things and the imminent revival of the ancient glories and activities of his beloved Forest, fain to have himself and us believe that his territorial attachment to the Forest and pride in its impending recovery had healed the wound of the Laird's departure. That there was a wound I knew, even if I had not suspected it, by Elspet's whispered admonition to me before dinner, "Dinna speak to the Brocach about the Laird." There must be something more, however, to satisfy the cravings of a nature like the Brocach's than mere attachment to rocks and stones and trees, and I hoped that Mr Linton Smith would be able to inspire the sagging giant with some element of personal esteem. The Brocach was only slightly over sixty years of age, and might still look forward to some years of activity on the Forest. His hopes of a rejuvenation of Dunraa were soundly based upon gossip with the "factor" or steward, who had had it from the representative of the Edinburgh law agents, and on what the Laird had told him.

"The Laird was sore against selling," Elspet told me the following day. "He just wouldna hear of it to begin with, but the creditors forced it when one of the mortgages fell due, and the holder of it wouldna renew and the Laird couldna find the money. He's become a proud and solitary man, the Laird, and told us nothing about it and wouldna hear of a farewell entertainment, but just came round amongst the old stalkers and said good-bye to them and that the new owner had a lot of money and was going to spend a lot of it on the Forest. He is now living in that big house on the left of the road as you leave the village to take the glen road, the first house you come to. He's still very busy with his County Council and what not, but for shooting and fishing he'll now have to depend upon his friends, I'm thinkin'. The Brocach and me have hardly said two words about the sale; we just know fine what the other would like to say, but canna."

Towards the end of August supplies began to arrive at Dunraa Castle to be taken in charge by the servants' personnel who had preceded them, and were putting the Castle in readiness for receiving Mr Linton Smith.

These supplies, unfortunately, all came from big stores in London, which meant that the village shopkeepers were somewhat badly hit by the loss of the Castle custom. Then Mr Linton Smith, his wife, and his family arrived, and, at various dates at the end of August and beginning of September, his various guests. Then a flag was broken at the mast-head above the Castle, and Mr Linton Smith was in residence.

The programme of that famous installation of the new owner was as follows : on Saturday night there was to be a great ball at the Castle to all the servants on the estate ; on the Sunday, Mr Linton Smith was to make a tour of the keepers' houses and meet each stalker, and the last of the guests was also due to arrive that day ; on the Monday, stalking was to begin, and the Brocach was to pipe the guests awake that, and every ensuing, morning, as he had done for the Laird.

The ball was a great success. Mr Linton Smith and all his house-party looked in after dinner, and danced for a short while, and then Mr Linton Smith made a short speech, in which he thanked everyone for his rousing Highland welcome, and stated how pleased

he was at being at last a Highland Chief. He had heard all about Highland hospitality and Highland loyalty, and was determined to maintain the one and was certain he could depend upon the other. Like their great national poet, his "heart was in the Highlands a-chasing the deer," and he was determined to carry out all the duties incumbent upon a landowner in looking after the welfare and prosperity of those dependent upon him. There were some references to his wishing to maintain all the established Highland customs, to schemes of improving the Forest, and one to Bonnie Prince Charlie. Then, after some more dancing, the house-party withdrew amidst the same loud applause which had greeted Mr Linton Smith's speech, and the fun went on to midnight, but did not trespass upon the Sabbath. A dispassionate account of the speech and the ball were given me by the Brocach and Nellie, the Brocach, however, offering no comment.

On the Sunday afternoon while the Brocach and I were sitting on our favourite bench at the end of the house, we saw Mr Linton Smith, his eldest son, and the "factor," Donald Stewart, coming across to the Dubh

Glen. This was obviously the visit of introduction and inspection of the stalkers' houses, and the Brocach rose hurriedly and got Elspet and Nellie to come out in readiness to receive the new owner. I stuck to my bench while the two parties were introduced, and there were a curtseying and bowing of the one, and a genial acceptance of it by the other.

He was a keen, business-looking man, Mr Linton Smith, rather smallish but not noticeably so, except when standing beside the Brocach and the "factor." His good sense had made him forbear to wear a kilt, and his quiet "plus fours" suited him well.

"Well, Simon," I heard Mr Linton Smith say, "so this is your little home, eh? Bit lonely, isn't it, in the winter?"

"No' to them that's used to it, sir," said the Brocach.

"No, I suppose not—no, quite. We did enjoy your bagpipe-playing last night, Simon, it was quite an experience for us all, you know."

"Many a one has enjoyed my piping, sir."

"Yes, I should think so. How long have you been here?"

"Man and boy, sir, I've always been wi' Dunraa."

"Really? We never get these long services now down South. Not getting too old for stalking and hill work, eh?"

"Nobody has ever found fault with my stalkin', sir."

"You take lodgers, I see," said Mr Linton Smith, looking towards me. "Bit risky on a Forest, isn't it, people wandering about and disturbing the deer?"

"We've aye taken lodgers, but only those that we know."

"Quite—I see. Just take me into your house, will you. These Highland cottages are so quaint, I think."

The party passed into the Brocach's house, leaving me somewhat puzzled. I could not think of anything definite that Mr Linton Smith had said which jarred, but he had somehow given an impression of not fitting into the scheme of Dunraa things, and the Brocach's dry answers and veiled rebukes were ominous. Perhaps the Brocach was to have another disappointment—an owner of Dunraa whom he could not respect.

The party came out again, good-byes were said, Mr Linton Smith shaking hands

affably with everyone and hoping Elspet would soon get over a recrudescence of her trouble, and departed, accompanied as far as the first bridge by the Brocach, who, on similar occasions, had been wont to accompany the Laird as far as the second one. He left behind him, I dimly felt, no atmosphere of those men of lineage—the army men, the governing men—whom the Highlands can love. There had been something too quick and nervous about his movements and speech to impress the Brocach or the vast peace of a Highland landscape, and the Brocach, in his kilted massive impassiveness, had seemed to look down upon him with a certain tolerance. Never, after that first conversation, could there be between the new owner and his piper those intimate colloquies which the Brocach had loved to interrupt with his "Laird! Laird!" That was all finished with.

Elspet, Nellie, and I were in the kitchen again when the Brocach returned.

"So that's the new mannie!" he said with his old snap, jerking his thumb in the direction Mr Linton Smith had taken, and we all knew that some centuries of Highland propriety had been ruffled by the manner of

the new Chief, whose affability and interest in his dependents had somehow only achieved pertness and patronising. What now about territorial attachment to Dunraa triumphing over the personal break?

On the Monday morning when the stalking was to begin and the Brocach was to pipe Mr Linton Smith's guests awake, I had plans which necessitated a visit to the village. I therefore resolved to accompany the Brocach and hear him pipe round the Castle, and thereafter go alone to the village.

It was neither dark nor light when we started off from the Dubh Glen that September morning, taking the private short cut to the Castle. A heavy frost lay on wood and heather, and the sharp morning air set our skins a-tingling and our legs a-swinging at a brisk pace. Blackbird and thrush were loud in the shrubbery surrounding the Castle, but otherwise all things were deathly still. In the pale sunlight that now gilded hillside and water, and was sprayed through the branches of the trees, rabbits sat washing their faces with solemn deliberation or scampered into the woods as we approached. The Castle itself, when we

came upon it, rose up gaunt and grey and turreted, seeming dead as was the silence around it, its white window-blinds standing out with a startling intrusiveness. Nothing moved or sounded, nor was there any smoke from the Castle chimneys.

I sat down upon a bench in the main approach to the Castle, while the Brocach, in kilted majesty, approached the main door and tuned his pipes. Then, gripping his bag under his arm and giving the drones a final throw over his shoulder with that fine swagger of his, he broke into "Dunraa is awa wi' Charlie," and proceeded to march around the Castle. Sharp and clear through the thin morning air came the light and scathing strains of that melody, mocking sleep as once it had mocked "the English," rising and falling and triumphing and jeering. "Once round the Castle" I counted, as the Brocach came in sight again, and now windows were being thrown open and pyjamaed and night-gowned figures could be seen looking down with great excitement at this magnificent figure waking them all so romantically. "Twice, and a full house," I grinned, as the Brocach and his mighty noise came in sight once more, and every window

had a tenant. Brocach, kilt, and pipes disappeared round the corner of the Castle again, blowing divinely.

That third round was never completed.

"What's the Brocach up to?" I wondered, as the melody came less strong and clear and then began to get uncertain and wobbly, and then became a series of grunts and wails and all manner of discordances. There was a last expiring wail, as when a bagpipe is finally deflated, and all was silent. I started up, wondering if the Brocach had collapsed—heart failure or similar distressing trouble—while the people at the windows seemed to be wondering what new Highland romance this was, suddenly breaking off a gay melody in full career. Then I saw what had happened.

Round the Castle, and making straight for the main drive on to the road, came the Brocach, walking with strength and upright carriage. Under his arm, but all limp and deflated, as is Punch when the police takes him away, were his pipes, bag deflated, drones hanging limp, chanter wagging, and gay streamers trailing on the ground. On he came, with strong step, and although he knew that I was there waiting for him, he

never looked at me or gave sign of knowing I was there. But, as he passed with that strong, defiant stride of his, his face was red and working, with every sign of an internal crisis. "Dunraa is awa' wi' Charlie" had proved too much for him. Under all circumstances but one, he could deceive himself with the belief that territorial attachment to Dunraa Forest was sufficient to recompense the loss of the Laird. But piping had ever been his great means of self-expression, and now, piping that Dunraa was "awa'," and not with Charlie, but merely because of his creditors, had shown him the hollowness of his self-deception. So, all unintentionally, he had with his piping called out the full house of the new tenants to witness that though Dunraa Forest might change hands, the Brocach could not change masters.

There had been nothing defiant or consciously heroic about the Brocach's breakdown during that piping; as Elspet put it to me, "It just came all over him unexpected like, and when he came home here he just sat down and cried and cried as Nellie did the night she came from Glasgow."

Mr Linton Smith understood this affection of the Brocach for the Laird, and was greatly

touched by it. He arranged for a different piper to come in the morning and evening and pipe the guests awake and to dinner, while retaining the Brocach as chief piper, in view of the approaching Games, and otherwise the incident was merely regarded at the Castle as a picturesque exhibition of Highland loyalty.

For the Fraser family, however, the incident was the end of a chapter. The Brocach went stalking during that season as before, but things would not go right with him. Twice he went wrong on the hills, and a third time he and his "gentleman" got caught in a mist which would not have bewildered the most amateur hill walker but managed to bewilder the Brocach, who did not get his "gentleman" off the hill until late at night, when search parties were being organised: a terrible bungle for a stalker. There could be no doubt about it, the Brocach's memory was going. He was living in a past which was fair and untroubled, peopled by a full family circle, and stalking Lairds, and faith, and hope. The long series of batterings by Providence (had he still argued about such things, he would have sworn it was by Lamont's Presbyterian Providence) had left

their mark upon him, and that last realisation of the spiritual loneliness of a Dunraa Forest without the Laird had made something snap.

He was pensioned off at the end of that season, Mr Linton Smith having taken a great fancy to him. He was given permission to stay on in the Dubh Glen until such time as a house he intended building in Dunraa village was ready for him, and February saw the family depart, with all their goods and chattels, for the village, having abandoned the glen after more than thirty years' residence.

And they entered into possession of the new village house, where none of them was particularly happy, and waited until the tourist season came, when they let their house and went to stay in a little wooden one at the foot of the garden, as so many retired stalkers do, and people came who understood them not and had never known the Brocach in his pride, and expected and got service from them, and no doubt thought Elspet was a dear old Highland soul and Nellie merely a good type of Scotch dourness.

Only sometimes the Laird in his passings through the village would stop to have a

talk with his old piper about days and things before they were broken men, and Alan Macleod, who lived in the village when not in the Forest, and still loved to talk with the Brocach, began to talk again with Nellie.

CHAPTER X

THE RENEWAL OF LOVE

The Frasers were not happy in that village dwelling. They felt shy, as if the few scattered houses which compose Dunraa village were staring at them and watching their every movement and habit, the shyness of a solitary man thrust suddenly into a room full of people. There was a feeling of constraint about them, of being on their best behaviour, as though something more were demanded of them by Dunraa Village than that utter cleanliness and tidiness they had maintained in the loneliness of the Dubh Glen. Nor did Elspet ever get used to the smell of coal which came from the few coal fires burned in the village, and to which she always referred as one might to Wigan or Coatbridge.

Though he never complained, he being what he was, the new life must have irked the Brocach sorely. Not that his position was diminished. The mighty role he had

played in the Forest, and the peculiarly intimate relations which had always existed between his family and the Laird's, were, of course, perfectly well known in the village, and endowed him with an importance which was almost patriarchal. Children touched their caps to him in his magnificent stridings through the village, and everybody felt it a duty to speak to the great man as well as a mark of grace to be spoken to, but the audience was not spacious enough for one of the Brocach's temperament. There is no room for heroics amongst people to whom the doings of a piper or of a deer forest are the stuff of their daily lives, nor was there any real novelty in the stories which the Brocach loved to roll forth to a people who knew them already. The Brocach had always been at his best when playing to an audience of tourists who had come to be impressed by all things Highland and whose sense of wonder and admiration spurred him on. When visitors came to stay in his village house, however, they were more aloof than had been the tourists in the Dubh Glen. Then the Brocach had been a host, now he was but a landlord letting his house and staying in a smaller one to do so. These

village holiday-makers, too, were not of the real stuff: they came for a social function which they enjoyed with no more zest than they would have done at some coast watering-place. Tossing the caber, pitting your strength against young Oxford and Cambridge, story-telling, and piping, in a Highland glen, are one thing: doing them in a village garden to an audience not greatly interested in them, and seeing merely a quaint exhibition of something unusual instead of making it a competition or taking it as a marvel, is somewhat silly, nor did the Brocach ever try it. But when the tourists who had known and appreciated him in his hey-day called on him for a short talk before going up to the glens, or he stood at the motor-bus watching the young walking tourists, with their rucksacks and camping outfits, setting off to rough it on the hills, he looked after them, as they moved off, with a longing eye, and no doubt sighed over this house-letting business as a dull and menial one. When these fits were strong upon him, he usually went up the road past the villa where the Laird now stayed, and hung about aimlessly on the chance that the Laird might be about and they could have a talk together.

Nellie felt the change more, probably, than did the other two. For all the quietness that was now hers, there was still that sullen, resentful look in her clouded eyes, and she avoided people now as previously she had eagerly sought them. Your villagers have long memories, and Nellie knew that her fall would never be forgotten and that she was a marked woman. So she kept largely aloof from the village life, and sat mostly at home reading and sewing, and no doubt thinking strange, unhealthy thoughts, making her still more shy and still more self-conscious.

Yes, a quiet household of broken people when I came up to visit them at Easter of that year, 1913. I never went back to the Dubh Glen after the Frasers left it, but stayed on with them in the village, in the "big hoose" when it was not let, in the little shanty at the foot of the garden when it was. It was well situated, half-way up a low hill, on one side looking down the high-road up which came the motor-bus from the outside world, and on the other up a glen which led eventually, after much hard work and crossing several other forests, to the sea and western glory. The Brocach usually spent a short time each morning pottering

about the garden, which even he boggled at calling "work," and then went for a saunter through the village to collect gossip which no longer really interested him. Dinner followed, and there came the afternoon with a sleep, while Elspet knitted and Nellie busied herself about the house, or read, or looked after the hens. Tea came, and again an evening with more reading, the Brocach immersed in his study of local politics all over Scotland as recorded in the newspapers which still came to him, or talking, with none of his old verve but as a man suffering death in life in a past which was no longer real, and Nellie looking after the old folks in a spirit of mechanical family love—deep but mechanical. Few people called upon them, and no sounds broke the stillness but the swaying woods and falling water, and the clucking from the hen-run which had a peculiar portentousness in that silence. And outside, the winter passed away, and spring came when the velvety hills were threaded by gleaming cascades, and summer came in its Highland glory, and one could only marvel again at the inevitable march of Time and its heedlessness of what happens in its processes.

But Alan Macleod still called upon the Frasers as of yore and was always welcome. When the Brocach dropped out of the Dunraa ranks, it was as if a keystone had fallen, and there was a general reshuffling in the Forest, the older keepers being pensioned off and the younger ones given new posts, or new ones appointed. Alan did not get the stalker's post he had wished, but was appointed keeper of the hill-ponies and general stabling on the estate with a nice little house near the main stables some five miles out of the village and beside a great waterfall, a pilgrim resort for all the holiday makers in the village. He was too serious a Highlander to let a matter of ten miles there and back interfere with his colloquies with the Brocach, and two or three nights a week he came up to the house on the hill, and always after service in the village chapel on Sundays, when he stayed to have dinner, to talk with the Brocach as they had done in the Dubh Glen, and learn all the lore and history of the pipes and deer and the Forest on which he was one day—it was his highest ambition—to be a stalker. He was a good talker himself, by this time, with many observations and experiences

of his own, and it was good to see the two of them arguing about the chieftainship of the Clan Chattan and such like matters with great wealth of learning and high seriousness. Elspet and Nellie always made him welcome, the Brocach always being more animated and cheerful when he came.

His frequent comings and goings made him almost a member of the family, and Nellie began to feel a new freedom in his presence, the only outsider before whom she was not shy and reserved. The sheer unconscious naturalness of Alan's behaviour was conquering her and giving her confidence in herself.

"I dinna know if Alan has thoughts of marriage," said Elspet to me one day, "but if he doesna take Nellie, she'll take nobody else. No' that there's any love-makin' on either side, but Alan's coming and going like one of the family, and behavin' as we've aye tried to do, as though nothing had happened, is putting her greatly at her ease wi' him."

This lay quite outside my province, however, though I could not help noticing a greater warmth and cheerfulness in Nellie's manner towards the one-time disappointed

lover, and the greater heartiness in the mutual exchanges of Christian names, the "Alan" coming from her with more comradeship than ever before. There were occasions, too, when I met them out for a walk, which usually took the direction of the Forest, which now seemed a soothing, uninquisitive place to Nellie.

When I came up again that autumn the Brocach greeted me with "The Laird's stalkin' with some friends o' his in Argyllshire but is coming up, later, to stalk wi' Grant o' Duneir, so he will be here for the Games," the Laird's movements still being of the utmost interest to him, and the fact that he was absent for the second successive season from Dunraa seeming to bring home to him again the desolation that had fallen on the place. But it was obviously comforting that the beloved figure would be seen at the Games. He showed no interest in the stalking reports from Dunraa, except when told him by Alan, but at nights he and I would go over the shooting reports in the newspapers, and when good results were recorded from the forest where the Laird was a guest, there were vast excitement and exclamations of "Capital, capital, man,"

with real enjoyment of the Laird's success. The Brocach must have known that this, his first autumn out of harness, was but a poor one, though he would not admit it.

Games Day came, and with it the usual excitement and overcrowding. All that morning the highroads converging on Dunraa had long lines of private cars and motor-buses and horse vehicles and cyclists strung along them, all intent upon arriving at the green where the games were held, while from glen and corrie and croft, from hotel and cottage, man, woman, and child trooped down to the great event of the season. Wild were the estimates which, as usual, spread through the village regarding the number of cars to be parked, beating all known records; wild the usual exaggerations of the enormous supplies of food and liquor ordered by the restaurateurs; wild the rumours of the names of the illustrious "big folk" who were to grace the meeting with their presence; awed was the mention of the names of the great athletes who were to take active part in the competitions. Then when the mighty trek was over, except for the laggards, and the sun and slight breeze had been allowed to allay

the dust and purify the atmosphere, pleasant to see the large green amidst the dark heather, backed at one end by an abrupt hill and open at the other to give a long rolling view down the glen where was the Frasers' house, while bell tents and large marquees and gay bunting gave an unusual atmosphere of colour to the rather solemn setting.

The territorial magnates were there in force that day, Grants and Camerons and Frasers, and every sort of Mac, and Lamonts, and Menzies, with their upright carriage and military prowess, old or in the making, carrying their kilts with a fine swagger, their colour well set off by the tweed jackets they wore, and, as they hailed each other or their tenants, their easy confidence and mastery hid the fact that probably in no fashionable gathering in all the world will you get such an atmosphere of aristocracy based on such downright poverty as in a gathering of Highland landowners. But atmosphere, physical and social, is what counts in the Highlands, and every Chief got his obeisance. And mixed up with them were shooting tenants who could have bought them out five times over but did not cut such a figure,

and hotel guests with Kodaks, and village folk looking on with quietly critical gaze, and hillman with dragging stride and wondering what kind friend would help him to get into his proper glen that night when it was all over but the bewilderment, and athletes in shorts and dressing-gown, and pipers in fine raiment, and a rabble of children.

And all that livelong day, when the march of the pipe bands was over, cabers were tossed, and weights putted, and hammers thrown, and marvellous was the dancing, and judges sat behind screens so that they could not see the competitors, who were blowing their very souls into piping competitions, and shouts of "Man, man, he'll have that hammer over the hill gin he has another throw," and "Oh, great Evan Cameron, he's never been beat, nor never will, indeed, indeed," as some mighty feat impressed a critical audience. And always a particularly warm roar of applause as some white-haired figure stepped into the ring, for Highland sports are the one arena where old men still play their part and toss cabers on the very ground where, but a few moments previously, some renowned young

giant from the Glasgow or Inverness police has created a record.

The Laird was there as of yore, with his own marquee where he held receptions, and people came to him and curtseyed to him, and were glad to be recognised by him, for what you are and not what has happened to you is the chief consideration. All that day the Brocach hung around that marquee like some fine master of ceremonies, and revelled in his short conversations with the "big folk" who, on their way to call upon the Laird, joked with him and recalled some passing incident of stalk or games which had stuck in the memory, and when he was not waiting at the marquee he was searching out laggards and saying to them, "Ye've paid your respects to the Laird, I hope?" and thereupon seeing that any remissness was promptly remedied. For that one day the Brocach had the Laird again as though nothing had happened.

But throughout all that day of social junketing and athletic striving I was aware of a rather lonely figure wholly out of place there and feeling a stranger—Jean, who, reluctantly, had falsified her mother Elspet's prophecy, and had come home again. Nellie

and Alan were to be married when the stalking season was over, and so Jean had been called upon to come home and keep house for her father and mother, and had obeyed the call. When the Hickmans came up to Dunraa, as usual, for the season, Jean came with them, and, as usual, returned to stay with her people during the holiday, only this time she was not to return south with her former employers at the end of the season.

Jean had not married "some English body," but had remained in the Hickmans' service all these years, being now of authority in the servants' department. Her interests now lay wholly in the South, in the London stage and cinemas and film stars, in the well-known personalities of the Hickman set, and the deaths and births and marriages, the official and service promotions, and the scandals, which, from time to time, marked the stages of their easy, joyous living, the Hyde Park Sunday parade, the buses at Hyde Park Corner and its bustle and uniforms, and whatever else there is in the panoply of London which can give simple souls that happy feeling of intimate contact with great events and people and make it

seem as a golden city. Her favourite reading was the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Sketch*, with their personal paragraphs and pictures, and their story-pictures of animals talking and behaving more rationally than did many of their human masters displayed beside them; her favourite art, posters of cheap Sunday up-river trips and of pleasure spots served by the Underground. Now she was back at Dunraa, and would be there until a double death relieved her of family duty, dressed in a manner which fitted but ill with her surroundings and speaking of things, and using a phraseology but dimly understood by Dunraa, and which failed to strike any responsive chord. No wonder that those sad eyes of hers, which even golden London had failed to gladden, looked out in fear and loneliness at that scene of primitive trials of strength and of the relics of a tribal form of society, and she must have wondered dismally what life in Dunraa could hold for her when even the junketing and festivities, which now meant nothing to her, were over, and she was faced with the long village solitude. But family loyalty is a strong feeling among simple people, and none ever heard Jean complain.

When the last stag had been grassed, and the guests all gone, and the woods were in that flaming, still repose which precedes the baring of the trees, Alan and Nellie were married by Father Grant in the village chapel. It was a quiet affair of best clothes and only the family invited, and after the short ceremony was over there was a marriage dinner in the Brocach's house and a feeling of restrained merriment. It was not precisely the marriage which any of them had looked forward to, and I, for one, was left wondering whether Nellie really loved Alan. Perhaps she merely appreciated his loyalty and tact and was determined to repay them, and found in the marriage an escape from the village with its prying eyes and long memory and a means of getting out to the solitude of the Forest? Alan had wished to go to Glasgow to be married, and have an outing and his first visit to a city at the same time, but Nellie had said she did not want to go to Glasgow again, and Alan had not insisted. So in the late afternoon, when the doleful joy was becoming a strain for everybody, Alan said, "Well, lassie, we'll be going home now." "Ay, Alan," she said; and, accompanied for some little distance

by the Brocach and Jean, they passed up the high-road to their house, set amidst the solemn woods, and with the great roar of its waterfall sounding through the darkness.

CHAPTER XI

THE CALL TO WAR

THERE came the year 1914, fat and smug-looking in the roundness of its number, as though fully conscious of the dreadful things it brought with it. It scattered its bounty with a generous hand, did 1914, leaving scarce a spot of earth untouched by its sowing, and Dunraa felt its effect very early in the year.

There were the usual smiling and chaffing when I again faithfully entered the village at Easter, and the usual welcome from the Brocach, who now prized me as one who knew of those other days, his and the Forest's. But the pleasurable excitement was but momentary, for evil tidings were abroad throughout the village. The Laird was ill. It had started with a cold caught while he was helping slaughter the spring run of salmon; he had been unable to throw it off, and inattention had allowed it to develop into pneumonia. The "proud

and solitary man" he had become had been taken to his house outside the village on the road leading up to the Dubh Glen, and there he was putting up another fight "to win through," as he had done with his creditors, but the result was almost as foregone as was that other one. His illness was the theme of conversation amongst all the little groups of gossipers in the village and in each household, and the doctor, on his way back from visiting the sick man, was waylaid and called upon to explain. The crisis was due in the early hours of Tuesday morning, and, when the sun rose and the village of Dunraa set about its business, the drawn blinds of the Laird's house and the tolling of the bell of the parish church of the Established Church of Scotland, proclaimed to it that the Laird was dead. Undertakers again took possession of the Laird's house, and the village gave itself up to a debauch of talk about death and its accompaniments.

The "proud and solitary" man was kept exposed until Thursday afternoon for the inspection of all who cared to look at him, and all that time people came to the house

and had a look at it and said the poor Laird, "him that's awa'," could not have been so happy there as he had been in his Castle, which belonged by rights to him, and perhaps it was just as well he was "awa'"; and then looked at the "proud and solitary" man lying there, and said his cheeks were greatly fallin' in, but he made a bonny corpse, yes, yes. And from outlying glen, and from watcher's bothy in high-up corrie, men came to see him lying there and to comment upon the changes death had wrought upon his features, and to compare them with other changes they had known on others lying in like state, things on which Scottish memories dwell. But on Thursday afternoon the "proud and solitary" man was left alone with his proud and solitary master to mark him as he wished, for the coffin was closed that day in preparation for the funeral of the morrow.

From early morning that Friday there was a crowding and bustling in Dunraa village at an unwonted season, for a great Chief was to be buried. Sun and shadow and rain-cloud chased each other across hill and wood, and the April, rain-washed

air smelt sweet and clean, so that the villagers were right when they said that "the Laird is gettin' a fine day for goin' to his last home." Once again the village sucked in, from glen and corrie and sawmill and croft, keeper and ghillie and shepherd and crofter. There was a more rhythmic beat of feet, and a shouting of orders, as the local company of the Territorial Battalion, which recruited over a wide district, marched into the village at one end and out again at the other to take up position at the Laird's house. Round the hotels there was great congestion as the Territorial Titles gathered there, arranging to have tables reserved for lunch, and then standing in little groups, each with his own clan tartan, and strong and masculine-looking with their rough knees and wind-blown plaids and kilts as they leaned upon their long highland sticks and discussed the dead Laird, with whom some had campaigned in India and shot in the Himalayas and Pamirs, and some had waged wordy battle in County Council or other local body, and whom all had felt as a very great presence amongst them. All the public bodies, too, with which

the Laird had been connected sent representatives to the funeral, and the Member of Parliament for the county was there, breathing freely for the first time in his life in Dunraa, for he knew that no one could "heckle" him that day with Scotch pertinacity and thoroughness. All the shops in the village were shut, and all the blinds drawn, and the villagers gave themselves up to a day of busy gossip and inquisitiveness regarding the crowd of distinguished people whom death had brought to the village, while the tourists from the hotels, who were up for the spring salmon fishing, wandered about with Kodaks, eagerly snapping the multi-coloured, tartan scene.

Lunch for the Territorial Titles, dinner for the lesser mortals, was somehow disposed of, and soon after two o'clock those who were taking no part in the funeral lined up to see it pass, while the main stream of mourners passed down the village street to the Laird's house. The village astonishment at seeing the local parsons go down together—the Established Church minister, Mr Fleming, who was to conduct the services, the U.F. Church minister, the Episcopalian clergyman, and the Catholic

Father Grant—had hardly passed, when a great and well-known figure, magnificent in swaying kilt and plaid and Glengarry bonnet, came in sight, walking erectly and as though conscious of great things. The Brocach, at his request and with Mr Linton Smith's ready assent, was to lead the pipers that day and pipe the Laird "to his last home." Ever since the Laird died I had seen him busy getting his long-since-disused pipes into proper order again, and had heard him sound plaintive notes on them; and now his wish had been gratified, and he had braced himself up for his last great effort and his last service to the Laird.

There followed a long wait while, unheard and unseen by us, Mr Fleming conducted the funeral service in the room where the Laird lay, and then the funeral procession formed and prepared to move off. Faint and far off, but clear in the thin hill air, came a high-pitched, slow-moving sound of pipes, the melody indistinguishable at first, but resolving itself, as it came slowly nearer, into "The Flowers of the Forest." There was again a silence, and then the Territorial band blared out a slow music, to stop again

just before the procession arrived in the village. The mourning was now resumed by the pipers, but this time, as they entered Dunraa village, they played "Farewell to Glen Croy," the pibroch of the Dunraas, and to that slow, dropping Lament the procession breasted the little hill of the village street, to pass out to the parish church and its churchyard. First came the pipers, with the Brocach in the pride of place, at the right hand of the first file, with Alan beside him; but the Brocach, for all his great pride in piping the Laird home, looking pinched and blue about his nose and cheek-bones. Their buckled shoes scrunched the mud with a good earthy sound as they passed, and then there came the heavy beat of the Territorial troops, and then the coffin drawn by a party of old stalkers. No black hearse with gloomy plumes, but a gun-limber with the coffin exposed to the wind and the sun and the chasing cloud-shadows, the Laird's helmet and sword atop of it, and a vast wreath of holly, the Laird's badge, at its head, as befits a Highland Chief, who, like all things Highland, lives very near the earth and its genial influences. Then came the mourning

family, and the Territorial Titles, and Mr Linton Smith and other newcomers who had known the Laird, and the clergy, and the former tenants and retainers, and whoever else wished to pay respect to the dead Laird.

Then, as they passed beyond the village and began to wind downhill to the parish church, that bleak, grey building began a slow tolling of its bell, and its door stood open, but the procession passed through the gate and past the open door, until they reached the spot where the Laird was to make one amongst many of his forebears. When the coffin had been lowered into the ground, but before the dull thud of covering earth began to sound on its lid, Mr Fleming offered up a final prayer, in which he revelled in those quotations with which Scottish mourners whip and lash themselves—"He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down, he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not"; "But man dieth and wasteth away, yea, man giveth up the ghost and where is he?" "And the rock is removed out of its place"; "As soon as thou scatterest them, they are even as a sleep, and fade away suddenly like the

grass"; but implored the merciful judgment of God on all those who walked in His way and kept His counsel; while the laughing April day and the kilted and tweed masculinity of that crowd and its strong cleaving to earthy things, gave a denial to the spirit of it all. But now the earth began to fall upon the Laird, the grave was filled in and the wreaths spread over it, a gay colouring of the brown earth above a man who had loved it and been strong upon it, and then people began to melt away. But one man walked away alone, the Brocach, his kilt still splendidly swinging from his hips, and his pipes tucked up beneath his arm, but walking as though he neither heard nor saw what was around him.

When the Laird was buried that day it meant that a full stop was marked in the family burying-ground. There were many breaks in the long line of ancestors there, for not all had died at home. Some had died soldiering, some adventuring, and some in exile as the result of attainder after Jacobite troubles, but always someone had been left to carry on the family and estate and to do service. But now there was no estate to give a rich background to such

nephew as might be the heir, the heritage wrecked by the extravagant folly of a man who had done good service to his country in all her calls upon him, but had forgotten his duty to those immediately dependent on him. Whether the call of a greater, freer life than the glens can afford would have been strong enough to break up the Fraser family and make the Brocach see it scatter, or remain but resentfully in Dunraa, even had the economics of the Forest been other than they were, is open to question, just as one may also wonder whether it is really worth while for anyone to stay in that seclusion. But, certainly, the Laird's folly had aggravated whatever other forces were at work tending to make the Brocach see his family go their own ways, which had nothing in common with his. His extravagance, at bottom, was really a betrayal of those who served him. Whether the Brocach stubbornly refused to see this betrayal, or whether he realised it but was too proud to show bitterness, I do not know, nor need we greatly concern ourselves about it. Loyalty is none the less meritorious when mixed with a pitying understanding of one's hero.

When the Brocach came down with me to the motor-bus to see me off at the end of that Easter holiday, he had the voice and face of a man very tired of life. The foundations of his whole being had been swept away, as though wife and home and family and himself were projected against a new world of a Time and Space he did not understand, and which no longer interested him. He was world-weary, and though he tried to summon up one of his laughing, chaffing good-byes, the thing missed fire. I never saw him again.

Fat, smug 1914 rolled on its course, and in the blazing hot autumn of that year Europe tumbled into war. There was a stir and commotion in the Highlands; old names, Gordons, and Camerons, and Seaforths, and Black Watch, became live and quick, and from glen and forest there was a trooping to the recruiting depots. Nothing much was known about the war beyond the general blackguardliness of the Kaiser, but when there was fighting going on in the Low Countries it seemed right, somehow, that the Highlands should be there, too. So strange names in France, and at the Dardanelles, and in Mesopotamia, and in

India, assumed a common currency and a common pronunciation in the Highlands, and there seemed to be a sort of vague fear, the only one there was, that Hector or Donald or Evan might lose himself in some of these queer places.

The Fraser family felt the stir, too. Alan was in the Scottish Horse, and duly saw Egypt, and Salonica, and a Malta hospital, and other places he had scarcely expected to visit. He helped to hold the line of the Strumna against the Bulgars, and came home with a profound disgust for the agricultural practices of the Egyptian fellaheen, with their weak scratching of the soil which they call ploughing, and a "Farewell to the Strumna," which a piper had composed and which expressed the general disgust with that section of the front and the weariness to get home again. Nellie, all alone during his absence, usually spent the long winters with her mother and Jean in the village, returning to her woodland house in the spring, and making a little extra money by teas which she gave to tourist parties who came to see the great waterfall.

Evan came back from Canada in a Canadian Scottish regiment, in which he

rose to be a pioneer sergeant. He came home before going to France, and Jean wrote me that he looked fine in his uniform and was a big man like their father and had grown a moustache. He was twice wounded in France and came home each time he was convalescent, and at the end of the war paid a farewell visit and went back to Canada, taking with him a wife, a young girl he had met in London.

Donald Beg was the only one of what had been the Glen circle who came to grief. Late in 1917 he went down with his ship, sunk by submarine in the Mediterranean, and apparently died as he had looked, "bonny and smart."

Simon Beg, too, as the war rolled on, was allowed to leave the Partick police, and join the Highland Light Infantry, with whom he saw much fighting, but came through it all without a scratch and went back to his police and his wife and his growing family.

Elspet and Jean, of course, lived on in their little house half-way up the hill, knitting for the "lads," Jean reading out the great Highland names which figured in the casualty lists or in the honours lists, and commenting with eager interest on the casualties in the

Guards and cavalry regiments which befell members of the Hickman circle, which was still a vision of earthly Paradise to her. And when the armistice and demobilisation followed the long effort, it was found there was not such an urgent economic problem in Dunraa, for there were not so many young fellows. But a vast number of new stories and new experiences had been added to its lore, and not a few new expressions, so that, on the Games Day, when a caber had been particularly well tossed, it occasioned no surprise to hear somebody shout, "Man, a pukka effort that."

Only, the Brocach knew nothing of these things, beyond having the last satisfaction of knowing his family had gone. In October following the outbreak of war he died from no very ostensible cause whatsoever, just slipping out quietly and being buried amidst a world which had no time to notice such things, he who had lived with no little noise and *élan*. He was buried in the Catholic churchyard of Dunraa beside his father, and his grandfather, Old Macrimmon, and various other Frasers. Jean wrote me her mother was bearing up well, and was greatly interested in the queer things that were happening

everywhere. But no doubt the hills and woods looked on in their coloured, statuesque October grandeur at this home-coming of one of their elect, and received him with serene composure into the very inmost places of their being.

CHAPTER XII

THE NEW LIFE

Mr Linton Smith had made money during the war, and when Alan came back to resume his duties as keeper of the stables, he found Dunraa had entered on a new phase.

All during the war, while Mr Linton Smith was busy with his war activities, his various war committees, and his produce-broking, his visits to Dunraa had been rare and short, and such shooting as was done had been mostly by convalescent officers, the game going to hospitals. But the Forest had been well looked after during that long interval. Food shortage caused by the German submarine blockade had forced the Government to insist on sheep being pastured in the Forests, but as little as possible was done on Dunraa, while pains were taken to shoot down the older hinds and doubtful denizens of the Forest, and grouse were carefully stocked and reared on the lower

levels. Careful and intense game preserving was the order of the day, and when the end of the war came Mr Linton Smith found his Forest in excellent condition. The Forest equally found its new owner was now called Sir Linton Smith, he having been included in one of the last batches of Honours.

Sir Linton Smith's war-time earnings allowed him to regard Dunraa more than ever as a mere social appendage. The Laird had lived by means of his estate, and Sir Linton Smith himself had wished to see a balance on the right side of the financial statement his law agents sent him. Now, with his increased wealth, such little return as came from crofts, the lettings of the spring fishings, and what not, interested him less and less, and Dunraa became a social toy on which he was prepared to spend money for no return, as one might spend it on one's garage.

For Sir Linton had got into a finer, rarer, social atmosphere as a result of his war activities. He was now in that tantalising Fringe, where shipping magnates, and City people, and oil, and textiles, and publicity, and all modernity, hover on the outskirts of a vaguely admired and vaguely understood

tradition of the land, and the shining order K.B.E. lights them on their way. Sir Linton, who had climbed by sheer hard work and ability, and who revelled in the Fringe, where he shone more resplendently than any of the other members of his set, fully realised the social advantage of having a Highland Forest, and was prepared to exploit it to its fullest extent, what with his war earnings and the profit of the "boom" years following the armistice. Larger and larger grew his house-parties, housed in the Castle or in the Lodges throughout the Forest, more and more was he sought after, more and more were more distinguished people included on his list.

A noisier, more bizarre atmosphere invaded the Forest during the season when the Linton Smiths were in residence. There were more motor cars than before, and bigger and more aggressive. A new style of house decoration quickly supervened upon the old, with the atmosphere of club chairs and a smoking-room predominant, and exaggerated heavy brogues and "plus fours" and heterogeneous plagiarised kilts supplanting the former quietness of tartan and tweeds. Numerous copies of the *Tatler*, the *Sketch*,

the *Scottish Field*, and *Scottish Country Life* lay scattered about the rooms, as more and more group-photographs of Dunraa house-parties began to appear in them. A knowledge of English social history never enabled you to identify any of these names in the Fringe, for whose proper understanding a study of the financial columns of the *Times* was a necessary preliminary. There was more of something approaching horse-play than previously, and whisky was rarely drunk without some mild joking and tittering about its supposed effects. There was frequently a little trouble between the stalkers and the guests, who did not submit themselves so readily to the stalkers' orders as the Laird's guests had done, and got angry when things went wrong. On such occasions as the house-parties came in contact with the villagers and Forest folk, doctor, parsons, shopkeepers, stalkers' wives, there was something different in their approach from that of the old-time guests, a feeling of amusement as if dealing with people to be regarded as curious specimens from a queerer world.

Neither the village nor the Forest of Dunraa derived such benefit from the activities of Sir Linton Smith as the Brocach

had expected. It is one thing to indulge in the luxury of a garage as a social amenity, quite another to play with an estate, upon which human beings are dependent for their livelihood, as though it were as personal as that same private garage. Large-scale intensive game preserving demands a sacrifice somewhere, as Dunraa soon found. Scots Law being what it is, and Scotsmen what they are, the most litigious people on the earth, there could be no tampering in that direction. But there are many ways of bringing stagnation to a countryside, as Sir Linton Smith soon discovered and practised. His main object was to preserve the grouse and deer from disturbance, and the Forest from being trespassed upon, or use made of the right-of-way tracks. Development of Dunraa village as a holiday resort was stopped by Sir Linton's refusing to grant more feus, or building rights, to intending builders. More and more crofts were suppressed, or conditions made impossible for them, while legal redress, where its possibility existed, became more and more difficult owing to Sir Linton's influence with the local administrators of the Local Government Acts. Stalkers and other glen dwellers

were strictly forbidden to let rooms, or to shelter people for the night, or to sell scones and cheese to them, and as it is a long tramp to cross Dunraa Forest, walking tourists were thereby severely lessened in numbers, and only the camping people could overcome the new edict. The loss of income to the stalkers, too, was appreciable, but this was not understood at headquarters.

Many amenities of the Forest were done away with. So, for instance, the track which led through the wood to the footbridge and the clearing at the other end from which was obtainable the only uninterrupted view of the great waterfall behind Alan's house, a pleasant picnicing resort, was deliberately blocked up, the bridge which served no purpose but sightseeing taken down, and so tourists ceased to come any more to that particular spot, again to Nellie's and Alan's detriment, who lost their trade in afternoon teas. When holiday-makers found their movements being restricted more and more to the village and its tennis and very sporting golf, on a course carved out of the hillsides, games which not everyone plays, they began to dwindle in number, and the hotels began to feel the pinch. This was reflected again on the

local trades-people and all the other village folk who gained from brisk hotel traffic.

So the beast grew ever more and more, while people dropped out with greater frequency and went to the cities or abroad. The life and spirit had gone out of the Forest, while its sporting amenities increased under Sir Linton's scientific and thorough game preserving. No common tradition had yet arisen to bind the younger generation of stalkers together, nor did it seem that one would arise in the course of time. The new house-parties were unknown people and uninteresting, with no real knowledge of deer and grouse, their habits and methods of killing them, and the literature pertaining to Highland sport, but with only a certain expertness in shooting; the old spirit of co-operation, too, between guests and stalkers engaged in a sport understood by both, and their humorous understanding of each other, were replaced by a new relationship, more aloof or patronising and never interesting. Service was given ungrudgingly because it was paid for, but Dunraa village and Forest were like Arnold's East, bowing before the blast in disdain.

And all this time, while the new blight, more withering and more inhuman than that which the Laird had inflicted on the Forest, was sapping its human vitality, Elspet remained in her cottage half-way up the hill, with Jean keeping her faithful watch, but looking sadder as her middle years came, and with a new look of resignation about her. Elspet was now old and white, and that, perhaps, was the only act of graciousness she could not perform, to die and let Jean get back to life while still young. It was no conscious clinging to life that kept Elspet alive. She was still interested in all things pertaining to Dunraa life, still interested in Simon Beg's steady promotion in the Partick police and the doings of his growing family, still interested in Evan and his new position as stores foreman in a Manitoba milling company, and interested in the grandchild his wife presented her with, still shaking her head somewhat sadly about the child that would not come to Nellie and Alan. But conscious desire to live there was none, and it was merely that unconscious tenacity to be found in invalids which kept her alive.

"I'm waitin' and ready to go," she said

to me once with that curious detachment with which the Scots can speak of death, "and it'll no' be right I should bide here and keep the others back. Jean is wantin' to be awa', for all that she never says a word of complaint, but she canna hide what's written on her face. And Alan and Nellie are no' very happy at the stables and will no doubt be wantin' awa' too."

Alan was certainly restive. The Brocach had broken him well into his tradition, his one success, but the tradition which the Brocach had known had nothing in common with that now prevailing in the Forest. The homesickness and sense of tiring strangeness which had been Alan's during the war had gone, and he discovered a new interest in what lay outside, and began to think he was missing life and better opportunities by staying where he was. The Forest no longer really interested him beyond being his present means of livelihood. It was not the Forest whose lore the Brocach had taught him, and the new owners and guests were not interested in him and his talk, did not appreciate him as the Brocach had been appreciated by his generation. It was dull, and the outside

world had been very interesting after all, and there was this Empire Settlement that everyone was talking about, and there were the young fellows in the village dropping off by twos or threes. Nellie, too, would like as much to be away as to stay, and anything decisive that happened, it was clear, would make them cut their feeble strands binding them to the Forest.

The first decisive event came in the late spring of 1922, when Elspet felt very tired, took to bed, and died, being full of years and of the knowledge that her death would mean the disappearance of the Fraser family from Dunraa, which could no longer hold even the Brocach's one success as an instructor, Alan. We were quite a small company at her funeral, and, if it is given to the dead to know these things, she must have been pleased at the lack of any poignant mourning, for we buried her in a chastened serenity, knowing that her day had been lived out and that her very pleasant ways would be remembered.

From that serene close and the passing quietness it brought with it, the remaining three turned, as we must all do, to examine anew life and its economics. For Jean,

the path was easy and straight. She stayed on all that year to look after the people to whom she had let the cottage for the season, but, when the Hickmans came up in August, she had an interview with Mrs Hickman, who gladly promised to take her back into service in the following spring when the London season began. So Jean, happy at the prospect of a speedy re-entry into her earthly Paradise, set about selling the house, which was sold at a loss, things being so backward at Dunraa, and, when the last tenants had gone, went to stay with Alan and Nellie until spring should come and she could enter the Hickman household.

And now happened the second decisive event affecting Alan and Nellie. While these final scenes were taking place, England had been running into the commercial crisis and there was an "axeing" and a saving and a cheese-paring throughout the land. Alan and Nellie were not exempt from it. Sir Linton Smith had no objection to spending money on his best social asset but he had a proper objection to paying more than was necessary. He began to economise on all his establishments, and

finally reduced the wages of the Forest employees by cutting off the increase given them to compensate for the rise in the cost of living. The Forest employees were thus treated like other employees in every walk of life, but it made Alan and Nellie wonder again whether it was worth while staying on. There was apparently much hesitating that winter and postponing of the decision, but at last it was decided to take advantage of the Empire Settlement provisions and to emigrate to Canada.

My first intimation of the decision was a letter from Jean announcing that Alan and Nellie had decided to go, while she was to rejoin the Hickmans in March. Alan and Nellie and she were to travel to Glasgow together, whence the other two were to sail on a Donaldson liner, the usual Saturday boat. Of course, they would spend the Friday night of their arrival, and so much of the Saturday as he had free, with Simon Beg, and as this would probably be the last time that so many of them would all be together, they were wondering if I could come to Glasgow and see them before the departure?

On the appointed Friday I took the

night train to Glasgow, where I arrived on the Saturday morning, and was duly met by the family reunion, with the addition of Mrs Simon Beg and the Simon Beg children. There was no excitement on the part of the emigrants, rather a contented acceptance of what was taking place. Talk of Dunraa was rather in the amused tone with which one speaks of something quite worn out and hopeless, but we had a good laugh as we recalled old times and experiences and jaunts. Emigration, when one is into the thirties, can never be very exhilarating, and the whole morning was somewhat of a strain upon us all, despite our laughing and the brave efforts of the family to entertain me, bearing me off, of course, to one of Glasgow's inevitable tea-rooms, where we ate Glasgow buns and "cookies" at an unwonted hour of the day. But an outsider, even after twenty years' friendship, still remains an outsider at these final family gatherings, so, when I heard the emigrants were to go down the river with the late afternoon tide, I said my good-byes and set off for a point far down the firth from which I would see their boat go past.

They came to the train to see me off, and that was the last I saw of the Fraser family, that little knot of people standing in the dirt and greyness of Glasgow whom I had first known in Highland freshness.

I cursed things in general rather freely as the train sped through the muck and mire which Glasgow has made of the Clyde. It all seemed such a confusion of right and wrong, of good intentions and bad results. The Laird had lit up the Brocach's life and then had betrayed him. The Brocach had meant well by his family, and, judged in the light of our modern cities and their hopeless masses, who would say that the Brocach's belief in an almost feudal dependance was wrong? Are not the proletariat, with their hollow freedom of the vote, as dependent on their masters, until an economic crisis comes along and leaves them stricken, as was the Brocach? But his good intentions had broken Nellie's spirit and left the whole family looking at him in doubt, with the family tie sorely struggling against the great misunderstanding. He had left his sons, too, without a trade, and it was more by accident that they had made good, if

good it can be called. There must be an objective standard of good, and I never liked the thought of Simon Beg exchanging clean Dunraa for a Glasgow tenement-dwelling, and his interest in the Games for interest in Glasgow football, and liking the change. Highland glens must be terrible things for those eager spirits who want to get away from them, but it seemed a pity that the going should have been so hard for the Brocach and his family, the change so poor—Simon Beg in a Glasgow tenement; Evan in Canada and married to a cheap London girl; Nellie, broken-spirited, and married to the man she had refused; Alan driven out from a home he loved, and Jean with her best years lost in a Dunraa she no longer understood; and all alike servants in a menial sense their father had never been. It was all wrong—wrong in its judgments, wrong in its valuations. I was glad to get out of the train and to breathe the wind coming up the firth.

It was pleasant down the Clyde that afternoon, a warm day of sunshine and with an unusually large number of little sailing boats plying about for that time of year. As the afternoon ran on, how-

ever, and the tide ran full, a grey mist began to creep over the firth, veiling the upper heights of the Cumbraes and the far peaks of Arran, dimming the geographical Highland line, which begins at the mouth of the Clyde, and making the Highlands seem bleak and lonely and forbidding. As the tide made up, the panoply of Glasgow's shipping made a brave showing for all the commercial crisis which had gripped it. I watched it as it passed up or down. There was an Anchor boat from India, and the Anchor boat making for New York. There was a Blue Funnel setting out for Australia, and a Clan turret-deck boat, and an Ellerman liner, long and high and with her buff-coloured stack. Nondescript tramps went up and down in the fading light, while a few early lights began to twinkle on the far shore of the firth. Then in the distance I caught the Donaldson liner coming down in all her blackness, with Alan and Nellie aboard. Her passing had about it something of that muteness and lack of drama which characterises humble lives, which are moved by laws they do not understand, and which had broken up the Fraser

family and driven out Alan and Nellie. On she came with all that inevitableness which makes of train and boat partings something final and irrevocable, and then put about to run south down the firth, past Arran to the open sea. The length of her quarter was to me as she passed, her lights up, and some people still waving handkerchiefs from her deck in hope of a response from the far shore. She passed me and drew away, so that I began to see less and less of her quarter as she came stern on to me, and I saw her stern-light for a moment, but soon she was caught and disappeared in the gathering mist which now hung lower on the hills and made of the not distant sea and sky a mere indistinguishable blur of greyness.

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